

# Reading Rivalry Coaching Guide, 2025-2026.

**Please take the time to read this guide to the end. {RR = Reading Rivalry}**

Thank you for volunteering to coach Reading Rivalry. We appreciate your time and enthusiasm for this fun program. The goal is to foster a love of reading!

The 2025-26 Reading Rivalry kicks off Monday December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

Grade 3 will meet at their allotted time once before Winter Break and weekly thereafter.

Grade 4 & Grade 5 Teams will begin meetings with their coaches on December 1st, they will meet twice over the first two weeks of December, Dec 1<sup>st</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>.

We are hopeful each team will be able to meet twice before Winter break to get the students to sign their contracts, go through the summaries of the books with the team creating excitement and anticipation about the books, to ensure the students are reading and have RR book(s) in hand for the Winter holidays.

The questions and deep-dive into each book will begin once the meetings resume January, by then the students will have read a book or two and will be ready for a deeper discussion.

## **Timing & logistics:**

- In order to make sure that coaching goes smoothly and without incident, please ensure you have completed a background check through the district.**

<https://www.sowashco.org/get-involved/volunteer>

- Teams will meet weekly; during the recess break. It is preferable you meet the same day each week to maintain a consistent routine for the students.

- Allow a few extra minutes for check in at the office to avoid any rushing or stress.

- Coaches will arrive at the students' classrooms a minute or two before the recess time, ask the teacher for the students on their team, then escort the team to the assigned area.

- Grade 3 teams will have their RR meetings in the Grade 3 pod.

- Grade 4 teams will have their RR meetings in the MES Commons area (during the Book Fair in February you will have the meetings in the Grade 4 pod.

- Grade 5 teams will have their RR meetings in the MES Commons area.

- End the meeting by encouraging the students to clean the area the team used, return chairs or stools to the correct place. Escort the students to the cafeteria.

- Update the teams google docs after each meeting, more details below.

- The competition is currently scheduled for Thursday, March 26th.

### **Housekeeping items:**

- A black Reading Rivalry box (**the RR box**) will be placed on the window sill in the office, and will remain there for the duration of the program. RR sign will be stuck to the front of the box.
  - Prior to every team's first meeting, the coach will pick up a plastic pocket in the RR box with their name on it. It will contain a spreadsheet/log chart to help you log what each student is reading, a student contract, and a RR booklist for each student.
  - During the month of December, the RR box will contain a brief summary about each book, please return these to the box immediately after each meeting for other RR coaches to use. Another option for the summaries is to use your own laptop or tablet to show the students the Summaries and spark the question about voting PDF
  - After Winter break, the RR box will contain discussion questions for each book, please return these to the box immediately after each meeting for other RR coaches to use. The questions will also be available on our Reading Rivalry page  
<https://www.yourmiddletonpto.org/enrichment/reading-rivalry>

- Have all students complete and sign the “**student contract**.” Many of the students will already have discussed the number of books they will read with their teacher or family. The contract helps create accountability for the students and the team. Discuss what it means for them as a team, if everyone reads a few books – get them involved in the discussion.  
Keep the completed contracts; remind the students about the contract if necessary.  
Note - the goal is to foster a love of reading, if a student is struggling to meet their goal, encourage them and praise them. If their goal may be unattainable encourage them to set more attainable goals, perhaps a few pages or a chapter at a time. Remember to applaud and recognize their achievements. The contract is to be used as a motivating tool and never to demotivate.  
It also encourages positive behavior amongst the group.

- Determine who is reading which book. It's typical for each student to read 3-6 books, but that varies depending on the student. Some teams like to allocate an expert to each book.  
Use the **spreadsheet/chart to log** who is reading what book; review the chart at the beginning of each session to determine and discuss each students' progress.  
Always encourage - if a student has a week they did not read, help them set an attainable goal for themselves and encourage them when they achieve it, no matter how small or big the goal, always encourage and applaud. It creates a positive association with books; the goal is to foster a love of reading and books.

- **Coaches are Not permitted to take photos** of any students during Reading Rivalry. It is the MES Policy.

- Please **do not bring food** as part of a reward or incentive. If you wish to bring something to incentivize or reward the team, stickers, erasers, & pencils are a lovely option. Note – coaches do not have to bring rewards or incentives. Finding joy in reading and in books is the goal!

## **Resources:**

- RR page - <https://www.yourmiddletonpto.org/enrichment/reading-rivalry>
- Study questions are created for each of the 10 books, by teachers, coaches and/or parents. They will help the students review the books and prepare for the competition. On January 5<sup>th</sup>, the study questions will be available to everyone our RR page under the book titles. Printed copies will be available to coaches in the RR box.

### **• Finding books, remind the students where the books are available:**

- Books are available in the classroom libraries, MES Media Center, Washington County Library, and the Wahington County Library app – Libby {Audio books are absolutely fine too} <https://washcolib.org/533/Digital-Library>
- If a student owns one or more of the books and would be interested in sharing their copies with their teammates that would also be appreciated. Note, they must be returned to the owner.

### **• Google docs – No child's name or child's picture is to appear here at any time. One doc per team, it is set up by the Literacy Chair. The **Coach** will share **updates** after each meeting or as needed. It is a great way for the coach to **communicate with parents/guardians** who are interested in supporting their students RR journey. **Sample updates include:****

- We met in the Pod / Commons during recess today. We discussed the book XYZ.
- All students read this book / only one student read this book so far. Ask your student(s) to tell you about the book and see what interests them about it.
- The students loved the book and had a lot to say about it, chat with them about today's discussion and why we laughed so much.
- Some students struggled with the questions for this book, please talk to your student about their thoughts on it and ask them if they would like you to read or discuss it with them.
- Our new name is ... We started /finished our poster. It looks good so far/ amazing!
- Next week, we will discuss the book XYZ, please read and / or discuss this book with your student in advance. Use the study questions and resources on the RR page to join in on the fun at home. <https://www.yourmiddletonpto.org/enrichment/reading-rivalry>

### **• Google sheet – one per grade - it is set up by the Literacy Chair. The Coaches in the grade will share their Team Name here to avoid any duplicate names in a grade.**

### **• PDFs include**

- Sign-up Form (the sign-up form to participate in RR)

- Student contract      Spreadsheet/log chart
- Summaries and spark the question about voting
- Study question for each book (available Jan 5, currently)
- RR booklist / voting sheet (the students will check one box on Competition Day)
- Would you rather...      Name Ten... (great for team building / breaking the ice)

## Suggestions for running your weekly meetings:

This section of the RR “guide” is just that – a guide. You are welcome to run your team meetings any way you choose. The information below was created from suggestions gathered from previous coaches, ideas of what worked well for them. Feel free to pick and choose, as well as share any tips you’ve found helpful.

- Suggestions for the first few meetings:
  - Play a little game to foster teamwork like “Would you rather...” or “Name Ten: come up with a letter and they have to come up with 10 answers that start with that letter” (Samples of each available in Resource pdfs).
  - During the first meeting, I went over the storyline of each book as I showed the book cover. This helped the kids decide what books they wanted to read.
  - Set goals on how many books each child would like to read. Let them know there will be **a prize and recognition for the students who read all of the books.**
- To help spark interest or discussions read a paragraph or a short chapter of one of the books.
- You can break the team up into smaller groups and pass out the discussion question sheets so they can quiz each other.
- When it came close to competition time, most of the group had read a decent amount of the books. They had all had a chance to review the discussion questions; this was great because they would start to debate and discuss.
- Check in each week with how much they read, ask them to tell us what was going on in the book, and set a goal for how many pages would be read by the next meeting.
- I read the majority of the books and created a spreadsheet of questions. As the competition grew closer and more of the books were read by at least 1 child, I would randomly ask questions from my spreadsheet and they would identify which book it was from.
- Create flash cards from the study guides.
- Ask the students to come up with 5 Reading Rivalry-style questions for each book they read; ask the rest of the team those questions.

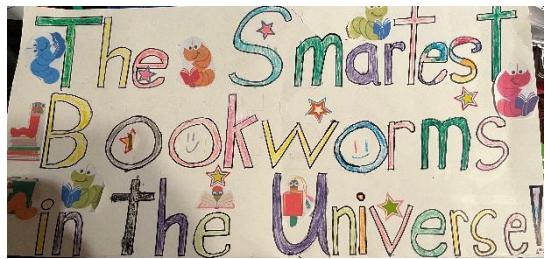
- If some students were having trouble focusing, some coaches would have the students do brief physical activities (jumping jacks) if they got a question right, etc. to give them a chance to get out of their chairs and move.
- Consider assigning 2 experts per book. Get them to create chart to help them remember the characters, events and locations in the book.
- It's all about reading and trying out new books, ask them to tell you about something new they read in the book.

## Team Name

- Starting off in December every team is known by their Grade # and their Team #.
- **Every team is expected to come up with their own name.** It is a process the students get a lot of enjoyment from. The students use a variety of inspirations to come up with their team's name, such as the RR book titles, the characters, the competition, their friendships and so on. Here are some examples of previous team names:
  - Better with Books came from the book *Better with Butter*
  - The Reading Rovers came from the book *A Rovers Story*
  - The Smartest Bookworms in the Universe came from the book *The Smartest Kid in the Universe*
  - Team 156 came from the number given to a character in the book *Odder*
  - Potato Pals came from friendship and banter in a group
- A **google sheets** is shared amongst the coaches in each grade by the Literacy Chair. When a team comes up with a name, the coach(es) adds the name to the google sheets. This helps **to avoid a duplication of team names in the grade**. The first group that writes their name on the google sheets gets to use that name and every coach continue to add a team name until the sheet is complete.

## Poster

Each team must create a poster showing and/ or representing their **team's name**. Students can use this opportunity to express their artistic creativity. Some are elaborate and may take a few weeks to complete. Some are not elaborate... this is up to your team, so let them run with it! **No student name or student picture is to appear on the poster.** The posterboards will be left beside the RR box in the office in the first week of **February**, one per team. It is the coaches' responsibility to mind the poster until the competition, when they will hang it on the wall behind the table where their group will sit for the competition. Here is a sample poster



## Voting

All students participating in our Reading Rivalry Program get to vote on their favorite book on Competition Day. They will put a check beside one book title on the sheet.

## Leading up to Competition Day

- Team name is decided upon and the poster is complete.
- Encourage the students to keep reading, to re-read if they have completed their planned books, or possibly aim to surpass their goals. The overall goal is still to foster a love of reading and finding joy in books!
- Consider asking the students to come up with their own questions and quiz their teammates.
- Determine a strategy for the competition
  - who will write the answer(s) on the white board / be the responder during the competition?
  - who will raise the flag to show your team answered the question?
- It sounds silly, but it tends to be an issue. Some teams have the students take turns, some reward the students who read all the books or those who contributed the most during the year, etc. Either way, it's better to decide ahead of time rather than the morning of, when everyone is running a little high on adrenaline! It's a good idea to have a mock quiz using the questions.
- Similarly, talk with your team about how they will make a decision if team members disagree on an answer. Remind them that discussions must be quiet, so the team next to them doesn't hear their answer.
- The questions will be similar to the study guide questions. In the event of a tie, the questions will not be from the study guides. Encourage your teams to really discuss the books and what happened, who the characters are, etc. Consider asking the students to come up with their own questions and quiz their teammates.
- The last RR meeting before Competition is to be considered a **celebration** of everyone on the team. Celebrate the teams RR journey over the last few months. Discuss the highs and lows – favorite books and least favorite books, new discoveries, next book, what is next, a new author or the same author. No matter what happens on Competition Day, the students have achieved so much already!

- Connect with the Literacy Chair
  - ensure the Literacy Chair is aware of any changes to your team from the original list provided to you in November/December. (Have any students dropped out or joined?).
  - let the Literacy Chair know an estimate of how many students on your team read/will have read all 10 books by Competition Day, including their names.
  - let the Literacy Chair know whether you will or will not be present for the Competition.
- The questions for the quiz will be picked like a raffle at the PTO meeting in February and stored in the office. The result of the raffle will not be shared with anyone until the morning of the competition, when all students are in class. Then the questions will be printed.

## Competition Day, March 26<sup>th</sup>.

- The RR Competition is in the multi-purpose room (in the 5th Grade Hall).
- Coaches will arrive 10 minutes early to hang your team poster.
- Coaches will pick up a folder.
- When the students arrive, greet your team and help them get settled
- Then Coaches sit in front of a team that is **not** their own and act as adjudicators for them.
- Spectators – students not participating in Reading Rivalry will sit in the center of the room. Teachers will sit on the sides. Parents will sit on the line of chairs at the in the center behind the student spectators.
- In the coach's folder, you will have a copy of the questions being asked, so you can help the teams if they don't hear the question the first time.
- The coach will also have a sheet to record the answers provided by the group and whether or not they are correct or incorrect.
- As the Literacy Chair asks the question, the team in front of you will show you their answer on a dry erase board. Then they will have a small flag to raise up when their team has provided their answer.
- The coach will record their answer and after the Literacy Chair provides the answer, the coach will check whether the team's answer was correct or incorrect in the given column on the right side of the page.
- After all (about 30 or so) of the questions have been asked, the Literacy Chair will call time and the coaches will turn in the answer forms. The answers will be double checked and counted, the team with the most correct answers will be the winner.

- As the results are being tabulated, the coaches will hand out the voting forms and pencils - all RR participants are given the chance to vote for their favorite book and determine the winner for the state.
- In the event of a tie, three questions will be asked, they will not be from the study guide, but they but were created especially for this purpose earlier in the year by parents & coaches. The coach adjudicator will record the answers given by the student. They will confirm who the winner is.
- All RR students will be celebrated.
- Coaches are asked not to give team gifts or prizes on competition day; all team recognition should occur during your final meeting. The PTO will handle awards for the winning team and 10 book All-Stars during competition day.
- The student spectators will leave the room first, followed by the Reading Rivalry students.