



Summary

“Imagination can help you reach into the heavens to grasp an idea, bring it down to earth, and make it work.” Walter Farley

---- *You can lead kids to words, but can you make them read? It’s an old question that two men in Florida are answering “yes” to, especially if you’ve got a horse*
---- *a black stallion specifically.* Erin Hayes, ABC News Correspondent

Purpose

The Black Stallion Literacy Project motivates children toward successful lives by helping them discover the joys of reading and wonders of learning through the magic of live horses and Black Stallion books by Walter Farley.

Goal

To spark the imagination of first grade students so they will want to learn to read, and motivate fourth grade students so they will know enjoyment of reading.

Case for Support

The proposition is simple: children, who learn to read, succeed; children who don't, fail both in school and in life. The logical extension is also true; the more literate a person is, the happier his or her life is likely to be. The National Adult Literacy Survey documents the direct correlation between illiteracy and numerous serious social issues among 44 million Americans young and old. Today 75% of the adult prison population is functionally illiterate. Even worse, 80% of their children will become incarcerated!

It is critical to reach children early with the vital skill of reading. The BSLP provides a simple but unique approach to motivate children to read *connecting* children with a *classic* hard cover book and the *magic* of live horses. Through this program the BSLP creates a motivated student for teachers and a motivated teacher for students. The BSLP helps start children towards a successful life from the beginning.

The Program

Conceived in 1999 by Farley's son, Tim Farley, and Mark Miller, owner of Arabian Nights Dinner Attraction in Orlando, Florida, the BSLP is a 501(c)3 non profit which has reached more than 100,000 children in 12 states the first four years.

First Grade Program

“When they touch the horse, they have a connection, a real connection with what they are reading about.” Tim Farley

The first grade program instills the love of reading in first grade students by combining a live horse experience with the reading of Walter Farley's books Little Black, A Pony and Little Black Goes to the Circus.

Prior to the actual start of the program, schools are provided posters of the rearing Black Stallion with a *Coming Soon* banner to be displayed in each classroom and elsewhere in the school.

On the opening day of the program, 6'6" stand-ups of the rearing Black Stallion are put up in each classroom, the Little Black, A Pony books are taken outside and the horses arrive. After a brief introduction to the horses, the students are invited to come and pet the horse. As soon as they have touched the horse, they are given their hard covered book. They are told that when they learn to read the book, they will be taken on a field trip to spend a morning with several horses.

In approximately 30 days, they are then taken for their "second touch", where they will learn how to feed and groom horses. During this trip, each student will read to one of the horse handlers, reinforcing the pride in their accomplishment. Students will then receive a copy of Little Black Goes to the Circus at their School Media Center after returning from their field trip.

Fourth Grade Program

"It's exciting," said Teresa Quirindondo, 9, "because the little boy was saved by the horse and I've never seen a horse save a boy."

The fourth grade program promotes the joy of reading while improving comprehension. It is well documented that the improvement from basic reading to the ability to read a "chapter book" is one of the most important academic transitions in a child's education. To motivate the students to make this step, the Black Stallion Literacy Project has developed a comprehensive program involving the novel The Black Stallion, the Frances Ford Coppola movie *The Black Stallion*, a live equitheater performance by Arabian Nights Dinner Attraction featuring Walter Farley's Black Stallion and a curriculum that meets National and State teaching standards.

Like the first grade project, posters are distributed prior to the start of the program and 6'6" stand-ups are provided for each class on opening day. The children are then given their copies of The Black Stallion and a copy of *Hoofnotes* for each child. Teachers are encouraged to make the BSLP a multi-disciplinary project, including reading, art, writing and even music in their classroom. The minimum BSLP requirement is that the students read the first third of the book and see the movie before the field trip to the Arabian Nights performance.

Fourth grade teachers receive the BSLP supplemental curriculum and teaching exercises at teacher workshops. This supplemental curriculum includes a book study guide for all chapters in the book, a list of horse related resources, a screen play for a portion of the movie, a story board and a host of ideas that are all adapted to fit state standards.

The program concludes with a field trip to the Arabian Nights performance, but the students' enthusiasm for reading continues long past the program. Participating schools report not only an increase in enthusiasm for required reading, but also a dramatic increase in the use of school library books.

After each program, the BSLP executive assigned to the project meets with the LEAD team to assess the program and improve the implementation for the following year.

In recognition of this impact on the lives of thousands of children, the Black Stallion Literacy Project was presented the Daily Point of Light Award from the Points of Light Foundation in a special ceremony at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC the fall of 2001.

In the Spring of 2002 the Black Stallion Literacy Project was featured on ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings for its profound impact on the future of young people!