

# Share the gift of reading

You may have seen more wacky outfits and cats in hats, or even been asked to try some green eggs and ham this week.

Walking into Tesnatee Gap Elementary, in fact, is almost like walking into Dr. Seuss' imagination, with scenes from his books decorating the halls.

Schools across the country are celebrating reading this week in events started to honor Dr. Seuss' birthday.

Theodor Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss, was born March 2, 1904 in Springfield, Mass. His children's books featuring primary colors, zany characters and fun rhymes are among the first children learn to read on their own.

School decorations, dress-up days and special visits from guest readers are meant to continue inspiring a love of reading started by him and many other children's authors.

Studies have shown how important literacy is to a child's development, and how their reading abilities at the end of third grade can affect the rest of their lives.

But, that needs to start while their brains are developing, before they reach school age.

Children who are read to at least three times a week are almost twice as likely to score in the top 25 percent in reading compared to children read to fewer times in a week, according to information gathered by the Literacy Project.

However, only 47.8 percent of children 5 and younger are read to every day, and 37 percent of children start kindergarten without the skills needed for lifelong learning.

According to data gathered by the Literacy Project, 85 percent of juvenile offenders have problems with reading, 3 out of 5 people in American prisons can't read and 3 out of 4 people on welfare can't read.

Parents may start the gift of reading at birth through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, supported in White County by Foundational Literacy.

The program mails a free book each month to children from birth to age 5. All parents have to do is sign their children up for the program.

To register for the Imagination Library, visit [foundationalliteracy.org](http://foundationalliteracy.org). Community members may sponsor a gift of reading at the same website.