

Dear Sue,

I want to tell you about my experiences with *Wireman*, issues 1-4. First, a little about the kids at Wedgwood. They are ages 8-18. I used *Wireman* with the middle and high school kids. Most kids at Wedgwood have past poor school performance. They often have learning disabilities and/or qualify for special ed. services as "emotionally impaired." They have had bad experiences at school and other places. They are often distrustful of adults and "the system." Many are victims of severe physical and sexual abuse and neglect. We now call it "complex trauma." Many kids are very street-wise and need to look and act "cool" at all times.

This also is a barrier to improvement in school. You can't look dumb or ask for help. It is better, in their opinion, to act tough and act like they don't care about school or anyone else. It is very difficult to engage them in anything positive in school. I am always looking for ways to "hook" them. *Wireman* has been a wonderful tool to do that this summer. It looks intriguing to them. Once they open it, they do not get overwhelmed by the amount of words or the difficulty of the words. Then they get interested in the story. I would much rather have them asking me for more than trying to force them to read or do an assignment! I appreciate the positive themes in the story. It is so hard to find things that interest them that are not on the "dark side."

I was in the classroom the first day the teacher gave out issue one. There was one boy who had not been engaged all hour. He needed constant reminders to keep his head off his desk and stay on task. As soon as the teacher handed out *Wireman* he sat up straight and read the whole thing. He asked for issue two. Another boy stated that he did not want a *Wireman* because he did not read. The teacher left it on his desk anyway. Before long the boy started looking at the cover. He slid the copy closer to himself. Within minutes he opened the issue and began reading. He read the entire thing and also asked for issue two. Overall, the whole class enjoyed them, were engaged and asked for more! When I told them I only had two issues, they begged me to buy all that I could. (Thank you for helping me get issues 3 and 4 so fast!) We had some interesting discussions about the story.

Another time there was a boy from another class that was assigned to do a project in the hall. He completed the project with a minimum of effort and then was just getting into trouble. I could see that he was going to be sent out of school very soon. Did I mention that the teacher tried every trick in the book? As a last resort, I asked him if he had ever read *Wireman*. He said no but that he was not interested. I went to my office and got issues one through four. I handed them to him and he sat right down and read through all of them. He is not a "reader" either. He has a low skill level and therefore thinks that reading is not fun. Thanks to *Wireman*, he was not kicked out of school and he read for half an hour. He is one of those street-wise, "gangster-wanna-be" kids. Not much works for them. They don't "fall" for anything. *Wireman* was able to reach him.

When I ask kids for feedback on *Wireman*, it is overwhelmingly positive. They say things like "it's cool, it's realistic, it's interesting." I think that they really respond to how genuine it is. Congrats to you for working so hard to make it something they can relate to.

Just wanted to take a moment now that summer school is finished to let you know how much we enjoyed and appreciated *Wireman*. Please let me know when future issues are available. It is so difficult to find things that work for these kids. Hope you enjoy the brief time that is left of summer!

Deb Knott
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