

## News Release

### **Children’s Author/Illustrator Duo Matthew Swanson and Robbi Behr to Launch Nationwide “Busload of Books Tour” in September. First Stop, Wilmington, DE.**

*The couple are crisscrossing the United States in a school bus-home with their four children for the 2022-2023 school year. They will visit Title I elementary schools – children from low-income families make up at least 40 percent of enrollment – in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., and gift 25,000 hardcover books to students and teachers.*

Chestertown, MD - Children’s author/illustrator duo Matthew Swanson and Robbi Behr will launch a nationwide literacy and creativity tour on September 2, 2022 in Wilmington, DE. The couple and their four school-age children will spend the 2022-2023 school year living and traveling in a converted school bus.

This first-of-its kind tour will combine a nationwide book giveaway and the ultimate family road trip with a major research study on the impact of creator / student engagement. The key objectives are raising awareness of the challenges facing America’s public schools and empowering reading, creativity, and collaboration in children ages 5 to 12.

In addition to the Tour’s central mission, Swanson and Behr will:

- Partner with Build-A-Bear Foundation and First Book to **distribute an additional 125,000 free books** to students and educators in Title I schools across America.
- **Conduct a groundbreaking research study** with Washington College, in Chestertown, Md., to measure the impact of author/illustrator visits (filling a key gap in the research on this topic).
- **Share the ultimate virtual road trip** via daily digital content – photos, essays, sketches, and videos – that teachers and librarians can enjoy and follow with their students.

The Chestertown-based couple developed the idea in 2019 when they received a \$30,000 grant to “do something awesome.” This initial support swelled with contributions from 1,000+ individual donors, making a nationwide tour a reality.

“We’ve seen hundreds of times the empowering impact author / illustrator visits can have on school communities. When kids realize we are just regular people, they recognize their own capacity to create. They start reading, writing, drawing, and telling their own stories.”

-Matthew Swanson and Robbi Behr

Author / illustrator visits can promote reading and creativity, but many schools can’t afford to bring in authors or buy new books. By visiting a Title I school in each state, Swanson and Behr (themselves the products of Title I schools) hope to bring books and creative learning opportunities to historically underserved communities and highlight the heroic work of public educators.

Swanson and Behr partnered with [First Book](#) to select the schools for the Tour. First Book is a Washington, DC-based nonprofit, providing books to underserved schools and educators across the United States. Pre-K-1<sup>st</sup> graders will receive [Everywhere, Wonder](#), a picture book about observation and storytelling. The 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders will receive [Ben Yokoyama and the Cookie of Doom](#), an illustrated middle grade book (the first in a series) about figuring out what’s most important and living one’s life to the fullest.

“While access to books at home is one of the most important predictors of educational achievement, millions of children in low-income households are growing up in book deserts. First Book has spent the past three decades furthering educational equity – and increasing access to diverse and relevant books has been a core part of our work for all these 30 years. We’re looking forward to following Robbi’s and Matthew’s journey and celebrating the power of books in children’s lives.”

-Kyle Zimmer, First Book President and CEO

Swanson and Behr will also work with the departments of education and sociology at [Washington College](#) to measure the impact of one-time author visits in Title I elementary schools—filling a critical gap in the research on this topic. The data could provide a powerful tool for promoting future literacy programming.

The Tour is fueled by a unique combination of enthusiasm, generosity, diesel, data, community, and coffee. Look for the colorful 24-foot school bus in a town near you.

**For more information:**

Please visit the Busload of Books [tour website](#), check out the [tour route](#), and learn more about the [schools they'll visit](#).

The work is in part powered by grassroots supporters through [GoFundMe](#).

Comprehensive Tour FAQ:

<https://busloadofbooks.com/faq/>

Tour logo, author photos, book cover art, and bus/family photos:

<https://bit.ly/RMBusTourImages>

**BUSLOAD OF BOOKS TOUR**

[Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube](#)

#busloadofbooks