

# **Hooked On Buddy Reading**

## **Introduction and Description of the Lesson**

### **Contact Information**

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### **Introduction**

The teaching of reading is a complicated and often conflicting art form. Theories, methods, and strategies leave teachers and parents in a quandary as to the best teaching path to follow. Even though the proper trail to teaching reading can be muddled, there is little doubt that younger readers benefit from being read to in their early years.

Kenneth Goodman cut through a lot of cloudy theories by stating, "Teach reading by reading." Storybook reading is a way to do just that. Studies have shown that storybook reading in the home has a multitude of positive effects. The results demonstrated vocabulary growth, increased background knowledge in subject areas, eagerness to read, and even success in the beginning of reading at school (W Teale, 1984). Reading aloud regularly to first graders produced increased listening comprehension, active use of language, and improved decoding skills. (Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein 1986). Oral storybook reading has numerous benefits and should have an important art in any successful reading program in both lower and upper grades. Studies suggest "A cross-age reading program is a promising way of helping poor readers in the upper elementary grades to improve their reading." (Labbo, Teale 1990)

Where would a primary teacher find enough time and resources to read to her students as much as they need? The answer lies down the hall in the upper grade wing. There, the rooms are packed with promising reading teachers in training. Cross-age tutor reading is the answer. The benefits don't end here, but rather begin magnificently. Upper grade students will benefit measurably by developing better oral reading skills and improve their own reading proficiency when they learn the teaching strategies they will employ with their younger tutees. Studies again prove this point. Research on cross-age tutoring shows those students who serve as tutors tend to make significant gains in achievement and attitudes toward school. (Cohen, Kulik, and Kulik 1982)

In organizing a buddy reading program at Alice Birney Elementary, John K Smith developed and implemented a detailed cross-age reading curriculum. By teaching tutors methods of reading instruction, with an overarching emphasis on service learning, there prove to be many outstanding rewards for the tutees, tutors, and school community. This lesson is based not only in the philosophical reasons and ideas of how to structure a buddy reading program, but also has

a detailed weekly overview and step-by-step reading lessons that tutors can perform with their tutees.

## **Instructional**

### **Preparation**

The manner in which each teacher, class, or school develops a buddy reading program is individually based on the people involved. The program's guidance and support can depend on how teacher frames the idea. The following is the framework used in Alice Birney Elementary Buddy Reading Program.

Service Learning can come in a variety of programs and models. Many schools have had community service programs that have been a part of their agenda for years. Infusing these activities into the academic curriculum will generate quality service learning programs that produce lasting results for the student and the schools.

When we consider the school as a community, then many traditional activities welcome community service: Recycling programs, school clean up, litter patrol, crossing guards, to name a few. Their potential for infusion into the curriculum is limitless. The key theme for students is "Can you help your school community?"

Upper grade students who join a cross-age tutor program reach out to help others. These students offer their time and efforts and are rewarded significantly.

Students access their previous knowledge of reading skills that they will impart to their tutees, which will add value to their current studies as well as improve their own reading comprehension. The following 4-6 grade English-Language Arts Content Standards met through the Hooked on Buddy Reading program

1.0 Reading: 1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5  
2.0 Reading Comprehension 2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5  
3.0 Literary Response and Analysis 3.1 3.2 3.3 3.4

### **Action**

There are common principles that teachers can share with their tutors in how to help younger students read. Many of them need to be taught explicitly with tutors and then modeled.

It is absolutely critical that each reading session is enjoyable. Tutors should praise and support the tutee. Encouragement of each tutee will promote confidence and independence in the younger reader. Students should end each session with a warm good-bye and promote and earnest exuberance for the next reading session.

Demonstrate to the tutors that they should place the reading marker (finger or paper) above the word and not below. Placing markers below words inhibits the eye when sweeping from the end of the line to the beginning of the next. This will promote reading speed and fluency.

The beginning of each buddy reading session begins with the tutor introducing the book to the tutee. Tutors should point out and read title and author of the book. Tutors will then lead a rousing “picture walk.” Tutors talk about each picture in the book including covers. Tutors could mention the illustrator if available. Tutors should encourage tutees to predict what will happen in the story. Stop on any important picture and discuss how his picture might relate to the personal life of the tutee. This will aid in the understanding of the text by the younger reader.

The book is placed flat on the table between the reading buddies. The marker is placed above each word and the book is read. Tutors should point out punctuation and encourage reading with expression. The tutor might re-read a sentence or two with exaggerated expression and demonstrate.

The book now having been read is discussed. The tutor asks and discusses the three big questions

- a. What happened in the beginning the story?
- b. What happened in the middle of the story?
- c. What happened in the end of the story?

The tutee might start this activity by simply retelling the story in their own words before breaking it down into three parts.

The tutor and tutee begin work on the book summary. The tutor guides the tutee in writing the captions to each section (beginning, middle, and end). The tutor should teach punctuation, complete sentences and use of guidelines for neat penmanship. If time remains the tutor and tutee can draw and color the pictures for each caption. This part is open to allow for various student completion times.

### Weekly Schedule

Employing double use of the existing classroom library schedule can maximize student time and effort. Students can use their current weekly trip to the library to obtain a buddy reading book as well as their own free reading book and conduct any research.

The tutee goes to the library during their regularly scheduled time. The tutee has already completed name and date on the buddy reading book report form (see appendix). The tutee picks a buddy reading book and checks with teacher for approval. The teacher is encouraging fiction and ability appropriate books that can be completed in one reading session. The approved book along with the buddy reading book report are placed in a box with the tutee's name exposed. The tutee now has the remainder of the library period to complete other library tasks.

The buddy reading books are delivered from the library to the upper grade tutors. The book will remain with the lower grade tutees who will return it to the library.

Buddy Reading book report masters and lesson plan masters are available upon request at:

Eureka High School

Service Learning Lab (707) 441-0271

## **Reflection**

Reflecting enables students to critically think about their service experience. Students may write in provided journal pages. During open class discussions, students share their experiences. This is a time for students to “feel good” about what they have accomplished. Energy and effort in this area will have long lasting effects on students and encourage future service events.

## **Student Assessment**

Student assessment is informal by the teacher, who reviews student attitudes toward their reading lessons with their younger tutees. Assessment by the teacher of reading comprehension improvement in the students, as they have been teaching reading, would again have to be informal. It would certainly be of interest to develop a pre and posttest to determine the reading comprehension development, but as of yet, none have been employed at this time.

## **Project Evaluation and Expansion**

The entire school becomes a promising recipient of buddy reading rewards. School pride soars as students work with students in a successful setting. Positive activities too numerous to mention are available for cross-age programs in all areas of the curriculum, from art to science. Buddy lunch periods significantly reduce discipline problems on the playground. The side benefits to the entire school climate might be just as important as the reading growth of the individual student.

The buddy reading program can help children learn to read and motivate their self-confidence as independent readers. Student working with student builds an excellent foundation for continued literacy growth. The Program can accelerate the progress of young children's reading and encourage the older students to improve their own reading fluency and focus on reading comprehension skills.

Clearly the outcomes in reading are impressive, but of equal importance is the positive social growth. There are parts of this program that cannot be tested and which may show up in other educational areas at other times. Students may demonstrate leadership skills, a greater sense of responsibility and self-worth. Teachers watching students working together see patience and warmth. Tutors and tutees learn greater skills on how to work together and develop a sense of belonging. These personal and social characteristics are just the traits necessary to keep kids successful and in school.

## **Celebration and Public Recognition**

Celebration is the component of service learning that recognizes students for their contribution. This would signal the end of their project. The principal could hand out a certificate or award. A thank you letter from the younger reader could be generated. This closure lets students learn that society values their hard work and contributions.

## **Materials and Staff Development Needs**

Materials needed are outlined with each lesson. Chalkboards are needed for the phonetic development section. Higher-level comprehension lessons will require copies of the reproducibles that are provided with each lesson (\ Buddy Reading book report masters and lesson plan masters are available upon request at: Eureka High School Service Learning Lab

(707) 441 0271). Students will have to become familiar with the Buddy Reading book report and have copies available to work with their tutees.

**Funding, Resource Support, and Sustainability**

Funding is not an issue, since most materials are available in most libraries. Only teacher lesson plan reproducibles are needed for some individual lessons.