

Classroom Focused Enabling Tools



Reading Buddies Program

Program Description:

Problem Identification and Analysis:

Two kindergarten teachers at one elementary school were concerned that 45% of their students were not getting their reading log homework done and were falling significantly behind on their goal to reach 25 book logs per student by the end of the school-year.

Efforts were made by both teachers and the school counselor to involve parents in resolving this issue. However, parents identified the following factors as barriers to their ability to get the reading logs done with their child: illiteracy, working two jobs, and too many other children in the home requiring attention/assistance. Efforts to engage older siblings had not proved successful with this subgroup of kindergartners. One Teaching Assistant worked individually with students on reading logs in addition to other duties. Although students were getting some logs turned in, this was a slow process and resulted in the teacher being left with 21 students and no additional support, during individual tutoring time.

Progress towards the 25 minimum book log goal varied by student, ranging from two to ten logs completed. Students not identified to participate in this intervention had completed fifteen or more logs.

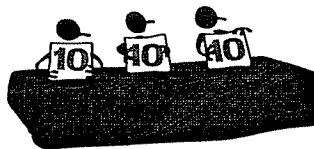
Implementation Plan:

Twenty-three fifth grade students were recruited to volunteer as “Reading Buddies” to nineteen kindergartners once per week. Teachers chose Fridays between 3:00 and 3:30 as the best time for both groups of students as this was “choice time” in each of their classrooms. The fifth grade teacher required students to have shown positive social behaviors as well as homework completion to participate in the “Reading Buddy” program each week.

Nineteen fifth graders were matched to the nineteen kindergartners and four served as alternates. Alternates were used in case of a reading buddy’s absence or inability to participate on a given week. Students were given a choice to be matched with boys or girls. Male fifth grade students all requested to be paired with a boy, whereas the majority of the girls stated no preference. Where possible, African American and Hmong boys were paired with a student of the same sex and ethnic group, due to the paucity of male mentors available in our school.

Each fifth grade buddy was given (1) a Reading Buddy Sheet* identifying the student he/she was paired with, (2) a copy of the Reading Log* to be completed with the kindergartner, (3) and a Tutoring Log* to track their buddy’s progress. They were instructed to let the kindergartner choose a book from the selection provided by the teacher and to read the book aloud to the child. Afterwards they were to have the kindergartner draw a relevant illustration, dictate to them a summary for the Reading Log, then circle whether they had liked the story or not. Finally, they were to help the kindergartner chart their progress on the Tutoring Log.

A party for the “Reading Buddies” pairs was planned for the end of the school year to celebrate their participation. The school administrators, respective classroom teachers, librarian and America’s Choice reading coaches were invited to attend the party. Each fifth grader received a certificate at an all-school assembly to recognize them as exceptional volunteers.



Evaluation:

After the third week of implementation all 19 students had completed one book log, and 17 students had completed two. Two of the 19 kindergarten students had been absent on the day that their “Reading Buddy” had come to read for them. One week there had been no school on Friday. After the fourth week, one kindergarten student moved out of the district, a new kindergarten joined in, and three fifth graders dropped out of the project.

The following modifications were made. To replace the three fifth graders who dropped out of the project three of the alternates were paired with kindergarteners, leaving only one alternate reading buddy. On weeks when there would be no school on Friday, the students would read together on Thursday. In the event that their Kindergarten buddy was absent on Reading Buddy day, an alternate day would be scheduled on an individual basis where possible

The fifth graders were highly invested in this project and frequently checked to make sure they would be participating each week. Both groups of students appeared to enjoy each other and could be seen waving hello to each other as they crossed paths during the week. Behavior improved for both groups, which increased the teachers’ responsiveness to this intervention. Benefits were seen in behavior, academics, and self-esteem for fifth graders and kindergartners. An unintended or unexpected benefit seemed to be that fifth graders were more likely to seek out the counselor for their own support.



Things to consider in developing a Reading Buddy program:

1. Take into account the rate of mobility within your student population and the risk of losing a few students before the year’s end. Provision of alternates proved particularly useful for the success of the program, as they were needed at each session.
2. Space issues – schools are notorious for having little if any unused space. Be flexible! We used parts of the classroom, the carpeted hallway in the kindergarten wing, and an ESL classroom that was free at 3:00 on Fridays. Students may or may not have tables to write at.
3. You will need to supervise and provide support or assistance to the Reading Buddy pairs, particularly in the first month of the project.
4. It was important to the fifth grade teacher to enforce the behavioral and academic requirements for participation on a weekly basis. Having alternates provided the kindergartners an opportunity to be read to regularly. This also allowed students with behavioral difficulties to participate in the program as they had additional incentive to do well and could experience being a positive member of the school community, without risk of penalizing the younger child.

Reading Buddy Sheet



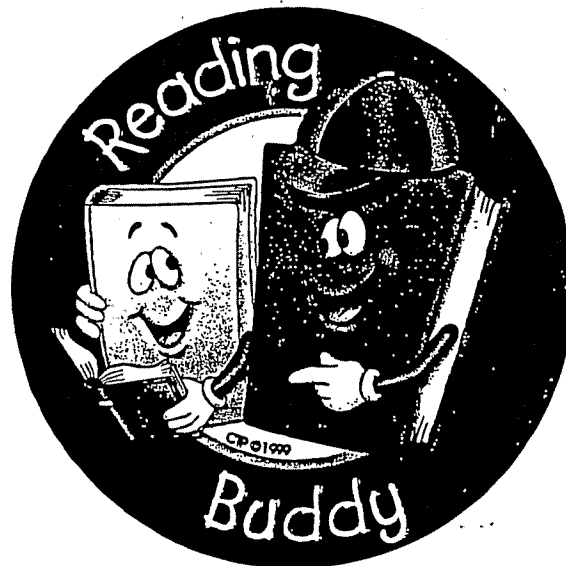
(Peer tutor name): Thank-you for being a reading-buddy!!!

Your buddy is: _____

Grade: _____

Teacher: _____

You are making a difference!



Reading Log

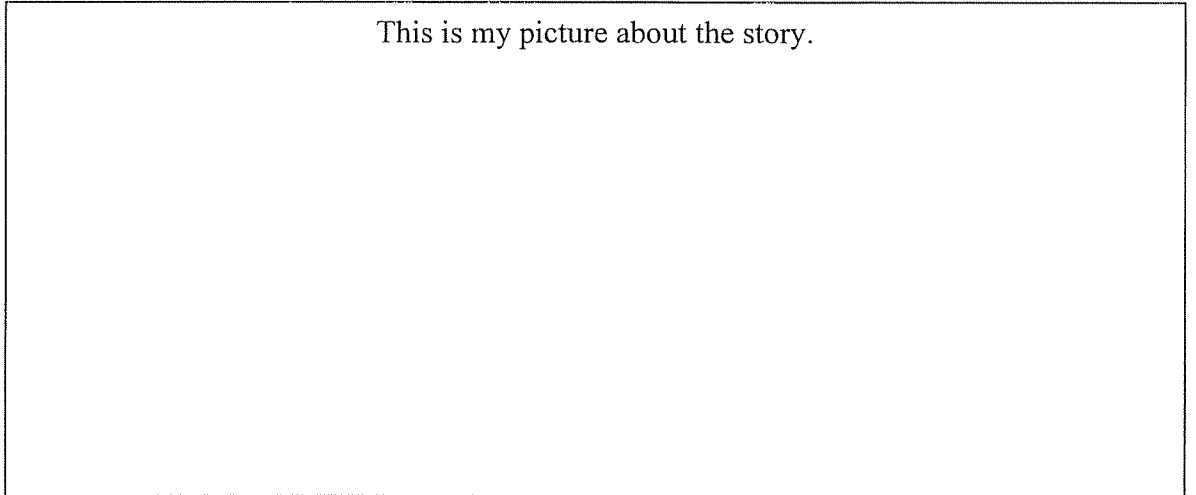
Read a book to your buddy. Write the title and author of the book. Then have your buddy tell you what the book is about and write his or her exact words on the lines provided. Next have your buddy draw a picture about the story.

Title: _____

Author: _____

This book is about.....

This is my picture about the story.



Color the face that shows how you feel about the book.



I liked the book.



I did not like the book.

Ready Buddy Signature: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Tutoring Log

Name: _____

Date	Book Title	Reading log completed?	Name of child read to

Second Step Violence Prevention Program

Description

Second Step is a violence prevention program developed by the Committee for Children (Seattle, WA.; www.cfchildren.org) and has been selected as a “Best Practice” model by the US Department of Education (2001). The focus of this model is to teach elementary students (grades K-8) empathy, impulse control and anger management skills through a series of lessons, role-plays and other exercises. The hope is that children will learn to relate to each other without violence (including various forms of bullying and harassment) by using problem solving skills.

How it would benefit the school

Second Step is a nice compliment to an existing (or developing) school-wide discipline plan. It can form a basis by which a discipline plan can be designed by offering a common language to use when trying to resolve conflict. Second Step also has an extensive parent participation program which invites parents to attend workshops to help them better understand the concepts being taught at school, and more importantly, help them implement the same strategies at home.

The format of the curriculum is easy for teachers to use and it can be easily incorporated into the daily academic plan. The lessons are very “user-friendly” and may only take 15 minutes to teach. Teachers have a lot of flexibility in using this program and can design their use of the materials to suit the needs of their students. Students enjoy the role playing activities, and there are ample opportunities to transfer learning to “real life” situations that arise between lessons.

Each lesson is on a large card, with a photograph of a social situation on one side and a story and discussion questions about what’s going on in the photograph on the other. The lessons also include for the teacher a preparation section as well as follow-up activities and ideas for reinforcement of the concepts learned.

How to introduce it to your school and get buy-in

When presenting any idea that you need staff buy-in for, always start with the administration. The principal has to believe that what you’re offering will be:

- research based
- good for the students,
- not too taxing on the staff’s time,
- doesn’t cost a lot of money to implement,
- doesn’t take away from academic time

Meet with the principal and if possible, bring along a staff member who is familiar with Second Step who will vouch for its effectiveness. Once the principal gives you the thumbs up, present the program to a representative body of the staff, or the staff as a whole at a staff meeting. Again, buy-in depends on the support of the principal, proven effectiveness (i.e., be prepared to offer supporting research to back your claims), and ease by which it can be incorporated in to the existing academic curriculum. You may want to introduce this program late in the school year so that training and implementation can begin the following September.

Trainings

Staff members need to be trained in Second Step by qualified trainers. The trainings last anywhere from 3 hours to a maximum of 8 hours, depending on how much time the staff wants to spend on it. Be flexible with the staff in scheduling the training and make it as easy as possible for them to attend. And be sure to provide food and/ or snacks to nibble on throughout.

Support and backup services

Once you are trained in and familiar with the Second Step curriculum, be available to the staff for support. This may be in the form of consultation about a particular lesson, a request to teach a lesson, or a request to observe the teacher teaching a lesson and then give feedback. You can also be the “point person” in communicating with the Committee for Children for added supplies, posters, or advise on implementation strategies.

Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum c. 1997 Committee for Children, 2203 Airport Way South, Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98134, or visit their website: www.cfchildren.org.