

Reading Buddies Program Overview

Literacy Is the Catalyst. Mutual Flourishing Is the Destination.

Reading Buddies is a relationship-centered literacy initiative that connects schools with caring community volunteers to help children become confident readers. As literacy grows, students, educators, volunteers, schools, and neighborhoods are strengthened together.

Our Story

Reading Buddies began with a simple conversation. An elementary school principal shared a challenge facing his school: his third-grade students needed stronger reading scores. Like educators everywhere, he knew that reading proficiency is foundational to a child's future success. He also knew his teachers were deeply committed to their students, but they were stretched thin across countless responsibilities. **Rather than asking teachers to do more, the challenge called for new partners at the table.**

That conversation became an invitation. Instead of asking, "What program can we start?" the question became, "How can our community come alongside our school?" The answer was surprisingly simple: **invite caring adult volunteers to meet one-on-one with students for weekly reading sessions.** Teachers would provide educational expertise and instructional guidance. Volunteers would offer consistency, encouragement, and caring relationships. Together, they would create an environment where children could grow in confidence as readers.

As volunteers faithfully returned week after week, something remarkable happened. Students gained confidence, and reading scores began to rise. Yet something even more significant was taking place. Teachers felt supported by a community that cared about their work. Volunteers discovered purpose and joy in investing in the next generation. School leaders watched meaningful relationships develop between the school and the community. **What began as a literacy initiative became something much larger: a shared commitment that strengthened everyone involved.**

Reading Buddies continues to grow from that same conviction: when schools and communities invest in children together, everyone is strengthened. *Literacy is the catalyst. Mutual flourishing is the destination.*

Our Mission

To cultivate confident readers through caring relationships that strengthen schools and communities.

Our Vision

We envision communities where children, educators, volunteers, schools, and neighbors flourish together. We call this *mutual flourishing*: a community in which every person involved is strengthened by the experience.

Our Core Beliefs

- Children thrive when surrounded by caring adults who believe in them.
- One-on-one relationships fuel learning.
- Encouragement builds confidence.
- Consistency creates trust.
- Schools and communities are stronger together.

Our Model

Reading Buddies succeeds because each participant has a complementary role.

- School leaders, reading coaches, and social workers champion the program, coordinate implementation, and support the school's literacy goals.
- Teachers identify students, provide instructional guidance, and encourage growth.
- Volunteers build caring relationships through consistent weekly one-on-one reading sessions.
- Ambassadors of Dignity recruits, trains, coordinates, and supports volunteers, intentionally removing as much of the administrative burden from the school as possible.

Together, these complementary roles help every child experience consistent encouragement and growth.

What Success Looks Like

Success is more than improved reading scores.

- A child who looks forward to reading each week.
- A teacher who feels supported.
- A volunteer who discovers the joy of investing in a child.
- A school that experiences meaningful community engagement.
- A community that shares responsibility for helping children succeed.

When literacy grows alongside relationships, communities grow stronger as well.

Learn More About the Opportunities

Interested in becoming a Reading Buddy?

Visit <https://www.ambassadorsofdignity.org/volunteer> to learn about current volunteer opportunities.

Together, we are helping children become confident readers.

Together, we are strengthening schools.

Together, we are *cultivating mutual flourishing*.