

Reading Buddies Program Overview

Literacy Is the Catalyst. Mutual Flourishing Is the Destination.

Reading Buddies is a relationship-centered literacy partnership that brings together schools and communities to help children become confident readers while cultivating *mutual flourishing* among students, educators, volunteers, schools, and neighborhoods.

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 that 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 to partnership. Rather than 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 reading materials. Volunteers would provide encouragement, consistency, and caring relationships. Together, they would create an environment where children could thrive.

As volunteers began showing up week after week, something remarkable happened. Reading scores began to improve, but something else was happening as well. Students gained confidence. Teachers felt supported by a community that cared about their work. Volunteers discovered purpose and joy in investing in the next generation. School leaders saw new relationships forming between the school and the community. What began as a literacy initiative became something much larger: a partnership that strengthened everyone involved.

Reading Buddies continues to grow from that same conviction today: when schools and communities invest in children together, everyone flourishes. *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. Students gain confidence as readers. Educators receive trusted partners. Volunteers discover purpose and joy. Schools deepen their connection with the community. Together, everyone flourishes.

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.
- Every person has something valuable to contribute.
- *Mutual flourishing* is possible when we invest in one another.

Our Model

Reading Buddies is a partnership built on complementary roles.

- **School leaders** champion the program and create an environment where it can thrive.
- **Reading coaches, social workers and other school administrators** coordinate implementation and support literacy goals.
- **Teachers** identify students, provide instructional guidance, and encourage growth.
- **Volunteers** provide consistent encouragement through 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 partners create an environment where children can thrive.

What Success Looks Like

Success is more than improved reading scores.

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

When literacy grows alongside relationships, mutual flourishing becomes a reality.

Our Invitation

Whether you are a principal, reading coach, teacher, para-educator, volunteer leader, volunteer, or community partner, you have an important role to play.

Together, we are helping children become confident readers.

Together, we are strengthening schools.

Together, we are cultivating mutual flourishing.