

Teachers College, Columbia University

**TC READING AND MATH BUDDY PROGRAM**  
**HANDBOOK FOR COOPERATING TEACHERS**

**2010-2011**

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- I. Introductory letter from Founding Director, TC Reading & Math Buddy Program**
- II. Program Objectives**
- III. Student Selection & Policy**
- IV. Partnership With Your Buddy**
- V. Program Logistics & Schedule**
- VI. Use of Technology (PSP)**

Dear Teacher:

First, the *Reading and Math Buddy* program staff want to extend a **BIG THANK YOU** for allowing us to be part of your classroom this year! We know that some of you are more familiar with this program than others. This packet is intended to help familiarize you with our program.

The *Reading and Math Buddy* program places Teachers College (TC) graduate students in neighboring schools to provide additional support for struggling learners in reading and mathematics. The program takes an **Organizational Learning** approach to providing support for schools, so the TC Buddies also provide support and help for you, your principal, and school administrators through their work.

Beginning in October, and continuing throughout the school year, the *Reading and Math Buddies* work individually with each of four (4) students for thirty (30) minutes each day, every day, Monday to Thursday. For two (2) hours, on alternate Fridays, we work in the classroom with you, supporting our four tutees within the classroom and helping other students in the class at your request and direction.

On the Fridays Buddies are not at school working with you and the children, they are attending group meetings at Teachers College, with fellow *Reading and Math Buddies* under my guidance. These bi-weekly meetings form the basis for discussions and training to ensure that the Buddies are supported in meeting the goals of the program.

I trust that the following information will be helpful for explaining the who, what, where, when and why of our program. We expect that throughout the year we will build positive relationships not only with our tutees, but with you, our cooperating classroom teachers, as well as all school staff and administrators. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any other questions about the program or the work of the *Reading and Math Buddies*.

Sincerely,

The *Reading & Math Buddies*

and

Dr. Dawn Arno

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## II. Program Description & Objectives

Dr. Dawn Arno founded the program in 2004. The TC *Reading & Math Buddy* program is a school improvement project designed to support the development of struggling learners in neighboring public schools in Harlem.

*Reading & Math Buddies* are graduate students who work with struggling students in public schools. The graduate students work as *Reading or Math Buddies* and come from all departments at Teachers College. Prior to school placement, TC Buddies are selected as either **Reading or Math Buddies** based on their qualifications. The *Reading and Math Buddies* are expected to spend two (2) hours per day in schools working one-on-one thirty (30) minutes each with the same four (4) students throughout the school year.

Each year, *Reading and Math Buddies* attend training sessions for two and a half hours every morning during September, prior to beginning tutoring in schools in the first week of October. The Buddies continue their training with bi-weekly meetings on alternate Fridays throughout the school year.

### *Individual Academic Attention*

During the thirty (30) minute tutoring sessions, the *Buddies* may work on a variety of activities together which would include your recommendations about particular topics or concepts that you feel need to be strengthened. Sometimes, you might ask the *Buddy* to help review assignments that you have given in class, in order to complement and supplement your work in the classroom.

*Buddies* are encouraged to plan lessons based on each student's individual needs. Very often, especially in mathematics, *Buddies* find that the children have many misconceptions and misunderstandings about fundamental mathematical concepts. In order to build a more solid mathematical foundation, it is necessary to revisit earlier concepts/lessons if it is found that they have not been mastered. This will often require deviating from the particular lesson currently being taught in class, and revisiting, re-teaching, and working on earlier concepts/lessons that the student still needs to master.

Integral to the work of the ***Buddies*** is a focus on hands-on constructivist learning, deep understanding, and mastery. Building background knowledge, and ensuring that students' understanding is paramount to the work of the ***Buddies***. This takes time, and working with the ***Buddies*** affords the children the individualized attention and time needed to correct misconceptions and develop the missing skills and foundation that have hindered their academic success.

The ***Buddies*** will incorporate creative hands on projects to foster the student's interest and engagement and to help ensure understanding of the concepts being taught. The ***Buddies*** work throughout the year towards the creation of a digital portfolio for each child. This year-long digital media project will include photographs, videos and representative samples of the student's work with their ***Reading or Math Buddy***. A copy of the parental permission letter for preparation of this digital portfolio is included with this packet.

### ***Mentoring***

***Buddies*** are expected to address the needs of the 'whole child' in their time together. We often see and recognize that academic struggles are coupled with other social, emotional, and behavioral issues. Because of the consistency provided by this program, the ***Buddies*** are able to help their tutees benefit from the trusting safe environment that is developed, which is one where the child is comfortable sharing both their successes and their struggles with their ***Big Buddy***.

### **III. Student Selection and Policies**

The program was designed to work with **four** low performing students in the class. It is up to you (the teacher) which four students we take. When selecting students, please remember to:

- Select **four** students that will remain with the a tutee for the entire length of the program (October. – April/May)
- Select students who are in the General Education program. Special Education students who have Individualized Education Program (IEP) should not be included.
- Take into account previous evaluations (such as standardized test scores, informal assessments within the classroom, etc.) as indicators of those who need the most help
- Consider the amount of time the child already spends outside of class with other help. If a child is already being pulled out for other services or to work with other intervention programs, it would be unwise to include this child for work with a ***Reading or Math Buddy***.

***Consistency*** is one of the critical tenets and at the foundation of the ***Reading & Math Buddy*** program. After the four students have been selected, there should be **no further changes made**, so that the children have the consistency of working with their ***Buddy*** for the entire academic year. It is very important that the students chosen be able to participate in the daily tutoring for the entire duration of the program (October to April/May). Meeting on a daily basis is important so that the ***Little and Big Buddies*** can form a trusting working relationship.

The ***Reading and Math Buddies*** work in the mornings between 8:30am and noon, and where possible, will work with you to arrange their tutoring schedules so that there are no scheduling conflicts and the children can work consistently every day with their ***Buddies***.

#### IV. Partnership With Your Reading or Math Buddy

Throughout the year it is extremely necessary to maintain communication with your *Reading or Math Buddy*. Please consider a few things:

- It would be helpful for us to have pertinent information about the student (such as previous test scores, reading level, suggestions about their learning style, particular needs, etc.).
- Exchanging contact information. Communication might be via email or at a regularly scheduled time, such as on alternate Fridays when Reading & Math Buddies are in your classrooms assisting you as a *Teacher Buddy*. It is important that you have an opportunity to talk with the *Reading or Math Buddy* about the progress and needs of the four children that they have been assigned.
- Please remember to let *Buddies* know in advance if there are scheduling changes that would interrupt the regular tutoring sessions. (e.g., testing dates, field trips or assemblies).

## **V. Program Logistics and Schedule**

In general, the ***Reading & Math Buddies*** meet with their tutees/students following the weekly schedule noted below: (this can be made flexible when conferring with your ***Reading or Math Buddy***, but it should preferably be in the morning):

- *Monday through Thursday: TC Buddies spend 30 min. with each of the 4 students (between 8:30a.m. & 12 p.m.)*
- *Friday: TC buddies spend alternate Fridays either (1) in the classrooms with all students or (2) in group meetings at the College with other Buddies.*

The ***Buddies*** are not in classrooms when either the NYC public schools or Teachers College is closed.

### ***Location/Place for Tutoring***

The Reading & Math Buddies need a place to work with their tutees. Most of the times the hallway just outside your classroom is re-claimed as useful instructional space where Buddies can work. Where the hallway is not feasible for working, other quiet spaces can be indentified. Somewhere quiet is preferable; *libraries and lunchrooms* have worked well.

Buddies also need a safe place to leave their belongings throughout the morning.

### ***Teacher Buddy Fridays***

The Fridays when ***Reading and Math Buddies*** spend their two hours with you in the classroom, they are there to assist you, the teacher. This time might be well spent working with other children on the classroom activities, observing, assisting with teacher tasks (like grading), or updating each other on the children's progress. How these Fridays are used can be a collaborative decision between you and your ***Buddy***.

## **VI. Use of Technology (PSP)**

***Reading & Math Buddies*** will be supporting the development of automaticity and their tutoring strategies with the use of a PlayStation Portable (PSP).

An important task of the ***Buddies*** is to help their students shift their attitudes of themselves as “failures,” attitudes that have developed as a result of their previous experiences with academic failure. This will take time and success in working towards mastery of whatever task they are engaged in. One of the strategies ***Buddies*** will use for motivating and building resilience is the use of high interest/low level content materials. Most of these materials the ***Buddies*** will create themselves, so there will be relevance to the interests and skill levels of the children.

The use of the PSP as an educational tool provides support for this strategy. **The purpose is not for playing video games or learning through gaming.** Rather, the PSP is a small and mobile computing device that can be used as an interactive digital support, sometimes as an additional tool in place of traditional flashcards. The students will themselves be engaged in the creation of the digital content to be used on the PSP.

**The PSP will not be given to the students, but will be brought to the sessions by the *Buddy* and will be used only during tutoring sessions.**