

TEACHERS COLLEGE

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

TC READING AND MATH BUDDY PROGRAM

HANDBOOK FOR COOPERATING TEACHERS

2010-2011

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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!. This packet is intended to help familiarize you with our program.

The ***Reading and Math Buddy Program*** places graduate students in neighboring schools to provide additional support for struggling learners in reading and mathematics. The program takes an **Organizational Learning** approach in providing 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 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,

Dr. Dawn Arno,
Founding Director, ***TC Reading and Math Buddy Programs***
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II. Program Description and Objectives

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

Reading and *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. TC Buddies are selected to work as either a *Reading* or *Math Buddy* based on qualifications of the TC student. That decision is made prior to placement in schools.

The *Reading* and *Math Buddies* spend two (2) hours per day in schools, working individually for thirty (30) minutes with each of four (4) students. The four students selected, continue to work consistently with their *Reading* or *Math Buddies* for the full length of the program, from October to May. Students being tutored are not replaced as soon as they begin to show signs of improvement.

Each year, *Reading* and *Math Buddies* attend training sessions every morning during September, prior to beginning tutoring in schools in the first week of October. The Buddies continue in staff development training sessions with bi-weekly meetings. These are held 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. These activities are designed to complement and supplement your work in the classroom. *Buddies* work to strengthen the children's knowledge gaps identified, and to support their classroom work.

Buddies plan lessons based on each student's individual needs. Very often, especially in mathematics, we have found that the children have many misconceptions and misunderstandings about fundamental mathematical concepts. In order to build a more solid foundation in both reading and mathematics, it is necessary to revisit earlier concepts/lessons that have not yet been mastered. This will often require deviating from the particular lesson currently being taught in class. This strategy is essential for getting the student on par with the rest of the class and understanding the material being taught in their regular classes.

Integral to the work of the **Buddies** is a focus on hands-on constructivist learning, deep understanding and working towards mastery. Building Background Knowledge, and teaching for understanding are paramount to the work of the **Buddies**. This takes time. Working with the **Buddies** affords the children the time and individualized attention needed to correct misconceptions and develop the missing skills and foundation necessary for 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 daily consistency provided by this program, **Buddies** are able to build a trusting, safe environment for their tutees, and the children become comfortable sharing their struggles in learning, - a necessary antecedent to their success

III. Student Selection and Policies

The program was designed for the *Reading* or *Math Buddy* to work individually with **four** low performing students in the class. It is up to you, your assistant principal and/or principal to select the four students to receive this individualized attention.

When selecting students, please take into consideration the following:

- 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) and who must work with a certified Special Education teacher should not be included.
- The amount of time that the child already spends outside of class with other extra 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*. This has proved to be confusing for both the child and the classroom teacher involved.

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 for you or the *Buddies*.

Consistency is one of the critical tenets at the foundation of the *TC Reading and Math Buddy Program*. After the four students have been selected, **no further selection changes should be made if possible**, so that the children have the consistency of working with their *Buddy* for the entire academic year.

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

Throughout the year it is extremely necessary to maintain communication with your *Reading* or *Math Buddy*.

- Exchanging contact information. Common planning time to discuss students is important and we realize that it might be difficult to find time during the morning sessions to meet with the *Reading* or *Math Buddy* assigned to you. Communication between you and your *Buddy* can be via email or at a regularly scheduled time, such as on alternate Fridays when the *Reading* or *Math Buddy* is helping in your classroom as a *Teacher Buddy*.
- When possible, please let your *Buddy* 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

The *Reading* and *Math Buddies* meet with their tutees/students following the weekly schedule noted below:

- **Monday through Thursday:** *Reading* and *Math Buddies* spend 30 min. with each of the 4 students (between 8:30a.m. & 12 p.m.)
- **Friday:** *Reading* and *Math Buddies* spend alternate Fridays either (1) in the classrooms as a *Teacher Buddy* and helping in the classroom or (2) in their professional development meetings at the College

The *Buddies* follow the Teachers College academic calendar and do not work when classes are not in session.

Location/Place for Tutoring

The *Reading* and *Math Buddies* need a place to work with their tutees. Most of the times the hallway just outside your classroom can be re-claimed as useful instructional space where *Buddies* can work. Where the hallway is not feasible for working, other quiet spaces should 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 any tasks in the classroom as you would like. The *Buddies* are not necessarily certified teachers and may not assume responsibility for your class.

VI. Use of Technology (PSP)

Beginning in the 2010-2011 academic year, Reading and Math Buddies will include the use of a PSP, (a handheld mobile learning device) . The PSP will be used to support the development of automaticity in both math and reading.

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. These materials will be created by the *Buddies* based on relevant 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.

Dear Parents,

Your child _____ has been tutored by a Teachers College graduate student, “a TC Buddy”, who will be preparing a Digital Portfolio to show some of the work that was achieved this year. The students have all done great work and we hope to present or possibly publish their work in public sometime in the future. We hereby would like to ask you for permission to allow the school and the Director of this project, Dr. Arno, to use your child’s work to share with other teachers and educators.

A copy of your child’s digital portfolio will be shared with you and the classroom teacher. This digital portfolio might include photographs of your child, and recordings of his/her voice reading or talking about their work this past year. If you agree, please sign your name on this letter and return it to the school as soon as possible.

Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Principal

I have read the above statement and agreed that my child’s work can be used by Dr. Dawn Arno in future research and publication.

Print Name

Signature

Date