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## Literacy volunteers in elementary classrooms : why do we need them and how do we train them?

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### Abstract

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Literacy Volunteers in Elementary Classrooms:  
Why Do We Need Them and How Do We Train Them?

A Graduate Research Project  
Submitted to the  
Division of Reading and Language Arts  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Education  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

Laura Meyers

September 2002



Literacy Volunteers in Elementary Classrooms:  
Why do We Need Them and How Do We Train Them?

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Literacy Volunteers in Elementary Classrooms:  
Why Do We Need Them and How Do We Train Them?

Introduction

As budget constraints force increases in sizes of many elementary classrooms, numbers of students not performing at grade level, and pressure from outside forces to increase test scores mounts, elementary schools are increasingly looking for ways to use volunteers. Schools are seeking ways to use volunteers in innovative and educationally effective manners to address the varied literacy needs of their students. Many elementary schools are looking for ways to incorporate volunteers into their educational teams as literacy volunteers and mentors rather than simply as a person to check papers, put up bulletin boards or help with classroom parties. As teachers successfully employ the use of cooperative teaching arrangements, schools are looking to use this method with volunteers. "Many schools are using cooperative teaching arrangements as part of their efforts to implement inclusion programs" (Salend, Gordon & Lopez-Vona, 2002, p. 195).

As a third grade Reading Specialist for a northeastern Iowa school district, I personally began searching for ways to serve a greater number of struggling readers in more effective ways. Because of decreases in funding, our elementary school team began looking for changes that could be made at little or no cost to

the district. This search led to the possibility of training volunteers to be used in our literacy programs

### Literature Review

#### *Identifying the Need for Literacy Volunteers in the Elementary Classrooms*

Much emphasis has been placed on literacy education in the past decade as an estimated 40% of all U.S. children are now reading below the basic level on national reading assessments (Wasik, 1997). Recognition of the importance of improving this facet of the education picture has risen to the highest levels of government, with former President Clinton's *America Reads Challenge (1997)* and current President Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

The primary component of the *America Reads Challenge* was the use of adult volunteers to tutor children during and after school and on weekends. The goal of the challenge was to have one million tutors nationwide (Wasik, 1997).

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* contains a key element of volunteerism to better meet the needs of our students. President Bush advocates volunteering by stating, "... we must encourage Americans to volunteer their time to serve as mentors to our young people" (Bush, 2002, p. 511). In his proclamation of this act, President Bush declared "on all Americans to help our young people better understand the importance of character and develop a true love of learning. By doing so, we invest in the future of our country" (Bush, 2002, p. 511).



In response to the challenges issued, many school volunteering programs have emerged nationwide. One such program is the City of Dallas/Dallas Public Schools Mentor Project. City workers are allowed to volunteer one hour each in the volunteer program (American City & Country, 1997). This program began in August 1994 with a goal of providing trained volunteers to work one-on-one with students to improve their skills in all subject areas. "School-age youngsters today need additional people in their lives who support and motivate them to identify and achieve goals in life," says City Manager, John Ware, who approved employee's leaving for an hour a week to volunteer for the program (American City & County, 1997, p. 67).

Another such program is Project Innovation led by the Telephone Pioneers, the largest industry-related volunteer organization in the world. "In this program, the Telephone Pioneers joined Kindergarteners Count, Inc., a nonprofit organization that began in the 1990's to bring parents, community leaders, and educators together in the classroom as a unified partnership. The Pioneers are now an integral part of the 'I LIKE ME' program. The Pioneers help touch the very basis of healthy self-concept, growth, and reading enjoyment in children in their critical developmental years" (DeMoulin & Sawka, 1998). Subsequent evaluation of students involved with this program showed a significant increase in reading comprehension scores.

As outlined by Carol J. Hopkins, there are many benefits to reading aloud with students. “Read-alouds showcase reading as a pleasurable activity, develop positive attitudes toward reading, expose children to the sounds and rhythm of language, develop children’s understanding of how stories are constructed, show models of good reading, provide exposure to printed language, promote vocabulary development, entertain listeners, and develop children’s appreciation for literature that could not be gained through their own reading abilities” (Hopkins, 1998, p. 310).

My findings through the teacher survey, personal experience, discussions with other reading educators, and a review of the literature coincide with the need for specially trained literacy volunteers in the elementary classroom.

*Identifying the Need for Specialized Literacy Volunteers and How to Train Them*

As schools move toward greater training and use of volunteers, it may be important to establish the difference between a trained volunteer and a certified teacher. “Although volunteers can never replace certified teachers, they can provide a needed service if they are used effectively. Of course, volunteers can simply read with children from time to time, but this alone is unlikely to make a substantial difference in children’s reading performance” (Wasik, 1998, p. 562).

To develop an effective program using literacy volunteers, both educators and volunteers need to see the needs and benefits of volunteer training to students. “To have an important impact on the reading skills of at-risk students, volunteers

need a well-developed, structured tutoring program, as well as high-quality training and supervision” (Wasik, 1998, p. 562). “Untrained volunteers might discourage struggling readers and even cause harm by their inexperience” (Wasik, 1998, p. 569).

As educators we have become aware of the need to equip volunteers to effectively assist our students in the area of literacy. Schools can take a number of steps to get the most out of working with volunteers.

Some of the simple steps for reaping the benefits of working with volunteers, as discussed by Susan Edgar include: defining your roles, setting a good foundation, and maintaining quality control (Edgar, 1990).

In regard to the defining of roles, the author suggests viewing volunteers as learning partners. Volunteers may provide one-on-one or small group reading help, assist students with assignments, or serve as classroom helpers. “One-on-one tutoring is one of the most effective forms of instruction” (Bloom, 1980). “Effective adult volunteer tutoring programs could help a greater number of children benefit from one-on-one attention at a critical point in their literacy development” (Wasik, 1997, p. 284).

To set a strong foundation, Edgar suggests determining the volunteer’s availability, setting a schedule that works for all, and agreeing on assignments that meet the school’s needs and the volunteer’s preferences. It is also helpful for the trainer to explain the school’s approach to language arts, math, and other subjects

and to discuss the importance of giving praise and constructive feedback to the student (Edgar, 1990, p. 80). "It is important to give children thinking time and to respond to questions rather than to point out errors. Gradually, volunteers learn that there is more than one route to literacy. They see that literacy is built over time and that positive reinforcement is more effective than correcting mistakes" (Worthy & Huffman, 1999, p. 247).

To maintain quality control, Edgar suggests finding time to talk, share observations, propose new strategies, and recognize volunteers' contributions. Any way you can express your appreciation will mean a lot - a certificate, a student-made holiday card, a luncheon, a class party, even a simple "thank you". Satisfied volunteers leave with a different perspective on education (Edgar, 1997, p. 83).

In addition to the steps mentioned for laying the foundation for successful training of a tutor, Wasik, 1998 lists eight common components that appear to be essential in creating effective tutoring programs for literacy volunteers. They are:

1. "*A certified reading specialist needs to supervise tutors*" (Wasik, 1998, p. 565). The coordination of a literacy volunteer program needs to be by a person that is knowledgeable about reading and areas of need in reading.
2. "*Tutors need ongoing training and feedback*" (Wasik, 1998, p. 565). This can be done in small-group training sessions to address areas of concern. In addition, tutors need a forum to share their own ideas with the reading

specialist and others.

3. *Tutoring sessions need to be structured and contain basic elements such as rereading a familiar story, word analysis, and writing.* Every program will contain different literacy elements and the volunteers needs to be informed of the expectations (Wasik, 1998, p. 566).
4. *"Tutoring needs to be intensive and consistent"* (Wasik, 1998, p. 567). If possible, children need to be tutored by the same tutor every week. This gives the volunteer and child a chance to build a mutually trusting relationship.
5. *Quality materials are needed to facilitate the tutoring model as children learn to read by reading.* It is important that the volunteer be provided with the materials to use in tutoring sessions and not be expected to choose these on their own. This controls what is being presented and helps volunteers to feel more comfortable (Wasik, 1998, p. 568).
6. *"Assessment of students needs to be ongoing"* (Wasik, 1998, p. 568). This is best done by the reading specialist and classroom teacher. This gives certified staff an opportunity to assess growth of the child and success of the program.
7. *"Schools need to find ways to ensure that tutors will attend regularly"*(Wasik, 1998, p. 569). It is important to make volunteers feel comfortable, welcome, and needed. Recognition by the school is key to the volunteers viewing their role as an important one.
8. *"Tutoring needs to be coordinated with classroom instruction"*(Wasik, 1998,

p. 569). It is more educationally sound for a child who is a struggling reader to receive one method of instruction with the same materials rather than different ones with different adults.

Wasik concludes by noting that, "If volunteers are to make a difference, schools must commit to developing and implementing programs that support both the success of the child and the success of the volunteer" (Wasik, 1998, p. 569).

The teacher survey revealed a surprising range of responses in regard to the need for specialized training for literacy volunteers. 58% of the respondents believed there was a need for specialized volunteer training, 33% believed there were advantages to specialized volunteer training, but that it should not be mandatory, and one respondent believed there was no need for specialized training. The comments included that of a teacher who said, "I don't feel that specialized training is needed. Volunteers need to like children and have patience with them" to "Yes, how to correct-do they supply a word or help the student sound it out. They need to realize that what they see in school stays there. Confidentiality, etc." Because of the wide range of perceived need for literacy volunteer training, it is important for each school to design training of literacy volunteers to their school setting.

## Methodology

### *Developing a Training Program for Literacy Volunteers*

The purpose for developing a training program for literacy volunteers was three-fold. The first objective was to prepare individuals wishing to volunteer in the school setting with basic instructional techniques and strategies to be used when working in literacy areas. The second objective was to use volunteers to best meet the needs of educators and students. Lastly, training of volunteers will hopefully meet the objective of retaining literacy volunteers.

The goals of the training program include that of familiarizing staff and volunteers with each other, familiarizing volunteers with the school setting, and instructing volunteers about methods that are available to use with students. The training will also provide volunteers with a support network to rely upon when volunteering begins by introducing them to school support staff who are available to them.

The first step in the exploration of using literacy volunteers was creating a survey for teachers in the school district (Appendix A). After creating and disseminating surveys to 27 teachers, I collected 12 responses. The responses were analyzed and compiled for later review and discussion (Appendix B).

The survey revealed that 58% of the teachers noticed a negative trend in the differences in the literacy needs and skills of the students that they teach today from when they began their teaching career. Patty, a second grade teacher with 23

years of experience, commented, "There is a greater need for kids to be read to now. Kids are less familiar with nursery rhymes and fairy tales." Deloris, a fourth grade teacher with 26 years of experience stated, "The students are not familiar with the basic children's stories that in the past parents have read aloud to them as children." Denise, a fourth grade teacher who has taught for 29 years said, "My students overall lack an understanding of phonics. The attitude I get is they want me as the teacher to tell them what they need to know." Many of the teachers surveyed echoed these sentiments, especially the opinion that students now are reading, or being read to, less due to competition from television, computers and other visual media.

To combat this negative trend, 83% of the teachers surveyed responded positively to using volunteers in the classroom to assist in the area of literacy education. Patty, a second grade teacher with 23 years teaching experience, stated, "I would use them to encourage a love of reading through modeling and book sharing. I'd use them to observe students' practice of skills." Linda, a second grade teacher with 32 years teaching experience, advised that she would have the volunteer "listen to the children read, drill on and practice sight words and new vocabulary."

The analysis of the survey responses revealed a perceived need for specialized volunteer training for literacy volunteers to best serve teacher, students, and the volunteers themselves. The focus of the training appeared to



need to be on reading strategies, teacher/volunteer relationship and communication, confidentiality issues, and reliability of volunteers.

After areas of importance were identified by classroom teachers, reading teachers and specialists, and administrators, a need for a formal handbook used in the training of volunteers and as a reference for later use by the literacy volunteers emerged. Because of this identified need, I created the Literacy Volunteer Handbook (Appendix C).

The process of deciding what to put in the handbook consisted of discussions with reading teachers, personal experience of working with volunteers, and referring to research about the use of literacy volunteers in other schools. After the initial discussions about what the handbook should contain, I created a rough outline of what I believed encompassed our school's needs for training of literacy volunteers. After showing the outline to interested teachers and making additions and revisions, I created the handbook.

The anticipated use of the handbook is as a guide to follow during required literacy training sessions. It is also anticipated that the handbook will be used as a continued resource by the volunteers. The intention is that literacy volunteers will feel comfortable and prepared in their role because of the information provided in the handbook and the training sessions.

The anticipated training sessions will consist of two one-and-a-half hour meetings with individuals interested in becoming literacy volunteers and teachers

interested in using the volunteers in their classroom. It is my hope that the two sessions will give volunteers and teachers a chance to get to know each other and become accustomed to strategies, expectations, and plans for the literacy volunteer program.

Tentatively, the first session would consist of introductions of volunteers and school staff and various “icebreaking” games. A school tour would be included in session one, focusing on areas that volunteers will need to be accustomed with, i.e. nurse’s office, Reading Specialist’s office, classrooms that will be using literacy volunteers, fire exits, etc. The session would then move to an introduction of the volunteer handbook. Each volunteer will receive a personal copy. As time allows, the Reading Specialist will begin to present information in the handbook to the volunteers using corresponding transparencies and stopping for questions and discussions as needed.

Session two, depending on what occurred in session one, will begin with more “icebreaking” games to reestablish familiarity and rapport. The Reading Specialist will distribute handbooks and begin with instruction of reading strategies, page 9 of the handbook. For this portion, it is planned to have students come in so that the Reading Specialist can demonstrate the strategy use for the volunteers and to allow the volunteers time to practice the use of the strategies. It is anticipated that the remainder of the handbook will be presented during session two allowing time for discussion when needed. At the completion of

session two, volunteers will be informed of which teacher they will initially be working with and have time to meet with that teacher to set up initial volunteering times and scheduling.

### Conclusion

As is evidenced by the differing responses and comments referred to throughout this project, it falls to the persons responsible for volunteer training at each school to individualize their training program and sessions to their particular population. Every elementary school building will have a demographic setting which affects volunteer availability and training, different staff and parent expectations and student learning situations that will need to be addressed. In response to the specific environment of the school where I teach, the handbook was created. It is my hope that this is the first step on our journey to effectively train volunteers to work with, learn with, and become a part of the students' lives.

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# Appendices

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Teacher survey

This survey was created as an informal method of gauging teacher's feelings about and need for literacy volunteers to be used to increase literacy skills of their students.

### Appendix B: Survey results

The results of completed teacher surveys tabulated for analysis and planning purposes.

### Appendix C: Volunteer handbook

The handbook created after surveying teachers, consulting with reading staff and examining current research trends. The handbook is intended to be used by a reading specialist or volunteer training coordinator to prepare volunteers to work as literacy volunteers. It is also intended to be used by volunteers as a resource in their role as a literacy volunteer.

## Teacher Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been in the education profession?

\_\_\_\_\_

What grades/subjects have you taught in the past?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are you currently teaching?

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you seen any differences in the literacy needs/skills of the students you teach today from when you began teaching? If so, what are they?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Would you use volunteers in your classroom to assist in the area of reading if some were available? If so, in what capacity? If not, why not?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you see a need for specialized volunteer training for people working with students in the area of reading?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What specific things would you want a reading volunteer to know, or be taught, before working with your students?

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Any other things you'd like to share:

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Thank you so much! If you would prefer I don't quote you, please let me know. I will assume it is okay to do so, if you don't let me know and may do so. Thank you again---

Laura Meyers



### Teacher Survey Analysis

#### Gender of respondents:

92% (11) female

8% (1) male

#### Demographic information:

A survey examining the need for literacy volunteers, needs for training of literacy volunteers, and possible classroom uses of same volunteers was sent to teachers in three elementary school buildings in northeastern Iowa. The buildings consisted of a pre-Kindergarten through 2nd grade building, a 3rd through 5th grade building, and Kindergarten through 5th grade building. Thirty surveys were sent to teachers teaching grades ranging from pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade.

Twelve teachers responded.

#### Questions asked/responses:

How long have you been in the education profession?

Range: 3-32 years

#### Breakdown of respondents' experience:

NUMBER OF YEARS EXPERIENCE	RESPONDENTS
0-5 years	1
6-10 years	0
11-15 years	1
16-20 years	2
21-25 years	4
26-30 years	3
30+ years	1

What grades/subjects have you taught in the past? (Multiple answers were allowed in this question. The number, and correlating percentage indicates the number of respondents out of the 12).

- 67% (8) experience teaching Pre-K through 2nd grade
- 42% (5) experience teaching in resource, remedial, or Title I
- 75% (9) experience teaching in two or more grade levels

What grade are you currently teaching?

Range: Pre-K through 5th grade

Breakdown of grade level being taught :

GRADE LEVEL	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Pre-K	2
Kindergarten	1
First grade	0
Second grade	2
Third grade	3
Fourth grade	3
Fifth grade	1

Have you seen any differences in the literacy needs/skills of the students you teach today from when you began teaching? If so, what are they?

- 17% (2) positive differences
- 58% (7) negative differences
- 25% (3) no differences

Would you use volunteers in your classroom to assist in the area of reading,  
if some were available?

83% (10)      yes

17% (2)      yes with reservations

If so, in what capacity? If not, why not?

92% (11)      mentioned specific reading activities in response to what  
capacity volunteers would be used in their classroom

Do you see a need for specialized volunteer training for people working with  
students in the area of reading?

58% (7)      need for specialized volunteer training

33% (4)      advantages to specialized volunteer training, not mandatory

8% (1)      no need for specialized training

What specific things would you want a reading volunteer to know, or be taught,  
before working with your students?

100% (12)      responded to this question

Responses:

- how to conduct reading probes
- help decode words
- how to ask comprehension questions
- good grammar
- read with excitement

- knowledge of exceptional authors
- patience
- developmental stages of reading and writing

Any other things you'd like to share:

50% (6) responded to this inquiry

Responses:

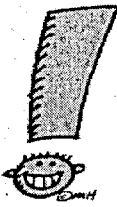
- Volunteers have been very helpful and successful in the classroom.
- Volunteers should enjoy reading.
- When volunteers are in the classroom, they give the message that others think education is important enough to take part in.

# Hooray for Our Reading Volunteers!



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Stop 

Before you go any further  
you need to know that we  
are thrilled to have you!

Reading volunteers are  
desperately needed and  
what you have agreed to do  
will make a difference in  
kid's lives.

Thanks!  


# Welcome to Our School!

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to the wonderful group of South Tama County Intermediate School volunteers. As a volunteer in literacy education, you will be part of an important group of people who assist our educators in helping students become lifetime readers! Most educators know that trained, specialized volunteers are a valuable asset in helping students succeed in reading and writing. As you share your time, energy, and talent with students and teachers, it is our hope that this handbook will help you understand the school literacy program and your very important role in helping teachers help students learn.

We hope you will find great personal satisfaction and pride as you participate as a volunteer for STC schools. The staff welcomes your assistance and support.

Sincerely,

Laura Meyers, Reading Specialist



# Getting Started...

As a reading/literacy volunteer, you are about to begin a challenging and rewarding adventure. Whether you are working directly with students as a tutor or assisting teachers with other jobs that are related to reading and writing instruction, you are becoming an important component in the exciting journey our students are taking to discover the magic and power of reading and writing.

As a member of a diverse team of people striving to make the educational experiences of our students the best it can be, you have special experiences, talents, and gifts that will benefit the students you will work with.

The South Tama County Schools Literacy Volunteers Handbook aims to help you understand your special role as a literacy volunteer in our schools.



# Being a Great Volunteer...

## Teamwork

As a literacy volunteer, you are an important player on our school team. When you are working with students, you will be asked to observe the same rules of conduct that our teachers follow. These include:

### 1. Respecting Individuality

Volunteers need to be aware that there are variations in teaching styles and classroom activities used to teach concepts to students. Students also have different learning styles that need to be recognized.

### 2. Working Cooperatively

The teacher and the volunteer will work as partners to foster positive outcomes when working with students.

### 3. Reliability

We encourage volunteers to attend all scheduled sessions, to arrive on time and to be prepared. It is also very important to maintain communication with teachers when scheduling changes are necessary.

### 4. Maintaining Confidentiality

When working with students you may learn personal information that can only be discussed with school staff. Such information is private and must not be shared outside of the school to prevent harm to students, families, and school staff.

# Working with Students...

The following suggestions may make you feel more comfortable when you are working with students and help to reinforce instruction:

- \*Meet students in a relaxed and friendly manner.
- \*Learn students' names and how to pronounce them.
- \*Try to keep to scheduled meetings. If you won't be able to meet with them at the scheduled time, let them know.
- \*Give students your full attention, sometimes that's what they need most.
- \*Don't be afraid to make mistakes, we're all human.
- \*Expect respect from students and give respect to them.
- \*Build students' self-confidence. Let them know that you expect them to do well on all tasks.
- \*If a student is unsure of an answer, allow them time to think. Try not to jump in with help "too soon".
- \*Do not tell students, "This is easy." They may then feel discouraged if they fail at the task.
- \***Be patient.** Your interest and enthusiasm may be the single most important factor in success in learning.



# Encouraging and Having Fun with Kids...

Students, like adults, thrive with praise and encouragement. Keep this in mind when working with students. Below are phrases that you may want to use to encourage students and let them know they are special. Don't underestimate the power of your positive attitude to enhance student's learning, we all learn best when we like the person who's teaching us!

- \*That shows a great deal of work!
- \*I like the way you explained that.
- \*Your behavior is great today.
- \*This is nicely done.
- \*I really see improvement in your work.
- \*You are really accepting responsibility.
- \*Make sure you show your parents your work.
- \*I can tell you put a lot of work into this.
- \*You can really be proud of yourself.
- \*You really outdid yourself today!
- \*I like the way you are working today.
- \*That's very creative.
- \*Good thinking!
- \*Now you've got the hang of it.
- \*That's a good point.
- \*That's one way of looking at it.
- \*That's a great observation.
- \*I really appreciate the way you're paying attention.
- \*Way to get right down to work!

# Reading, Writing, and Language Usage...

Learning to read goes "hand in hand" with other language processes: listening, speaking and writing. When students are learning to read and developing the skills needed while reading, writing and speaking they use personal experiences and information from text to build understandings and to make progress.

Below are a few goals our teachers want their students to strive for and that you can be an important part of developing:

1. Have a **positive attitude** toward reading and writing.
2. Read various types of text for different purposes:
  - \*literary experiences----novels, plays, short stories
  - \*information experiences---non-fiction books, articles, editorials
  - \*task performance---follow directions
3. Write for different audiences and purposes:
  - \*to inform
  - \*to persuade
  - \*to tell personal ideas
  - \*to tell a story
4. Demonstrate the ability to read, think and write from different perspectives:
  - \*encourage global understanding
  - \*develop interpretation
  - \*encourage personal response
5. Have many writing experiences and opportunities to develop the skills used in writing.

# A Few Great Strategies to Use with Students...

As a volunteer working with students who are learning to read and developing their reading skills, you will see students at many different developmental levels. Below are some ways that you may be able to help students as they journey along their road to being a reader.

**\*Chunking---**If a student is struggling with a word, cover the word and reveal it in small "chunks" until the whole word has been read in parts and then encourage them to read it all together, i.e. understand could be read as: "un---der---stand" and then "understand"

**\*Use Picture Clues---**If a student is reading and says a word that is incorrect or can't figure out the word, encourage them to use pictures to help them. i.e. they read: "green car" instead of "gray car", encourage them to look at the picture for a clue as to what the word should be

**\*Skip a Word, Read rest of the Sentence, Reread---**When a student is becoming frustrated with a word and is not able to "chunk" it, it is often helpful to cover that word and finish reading the sentence. Then encourage the student to use the other words to help them figure out what the word is. Have them reread the sentence with the word they have figured out.

These are just a few ideas to try to help our students become great readers, but, above all, we want our students to love reading. If you see that a student is becoming really frustrated, help them out by supplying the word. They'll feel better and so will you!

Keep going!



You're doing  
something that is  
important!

You are appreciated!

# Ideas for Reading with Students...

One thing educators have begun to realize about reading is that it isn't enough to teach students how to read, we need to develop a love for reading in the students we teach. To help with this, you may be asked to simply listen to students as they read aloud. The reason for this is because the more students read aloud, the more comfortable they feel; the more comfortable they feel, the more they'll want to read!

Below are a few effective "Read Along Techniques" that may be helpful as you help the students you work with become better readers.

**\*Choral Reading**---volunteer and students read passages together; this gives students an opportunity to hear how fluent reading sounds without the anxiety of reading alone

**\*Echo Reading**---volunteer reads a portion of a passage, student "echoes" the reading; this allows students to practice solo fluent reading without pausing to figure out each word

**\*Paired Reading**---volunteer reads passage to the student as the student follows along with their finger moving underneath the words being read, periodically the volunteer can stop and point out particularly difficult words and check to make sure the student's finger is on the right word; this is a non-threatening way for students to be exposed to challenging text

Working with students you'll find ways that work best for particular students, that's the goal-finding what works and doing it!



# A Few Ideas for Reading to Students...

Educational researchers have conducted and continue to conduct studies on the best way to teach students to read. What has been found over and over is:

\*"The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children."<sup>1</sup>

\*"It (reading aloud) is a practice that should continue throughout the grades."<sup>2</sup>

Having said this, reading aloud can be scary! Below are some helpful suggestions for reading aloud to students. The most important thing to remember, though, is that kids just love being read to no matter how we do it!

\*Let students have a few minutes to settle down before starting.

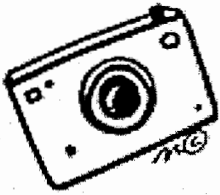
\*If you are reading a picture book, make sure everyone gets to see the pictures.

\*Use lots of expression. If you feel comfortable, change your voice for different characters.

\*Read slowly, this gives listeners time to form pictures in their mind about what they are hearing.

\*If you feel the students are becoming restless or bored, stop and talk about what you've read to give them time to redirect their thoughts.

\*Most importantly, HAVE FUN!



# The Big Picture...

As has been said throughout this handbook, our ultimate goal is that students will become lifelong learners and readers. One of the most important steps to achieving this goal is students understanding, or comprehending, what they read. It is important to check student's comprehension often as they read and below are some ways to do this.

**\*Predicting** --- Before starting to read ask students to predict what the story will be about by reading the title and looking at the cover and pictures; predicting can also be done throughout the book, i.e. "What do you think will happen on the next page, in the next chapter, at the end of the book, etc?"

**\*Pre-reading discussion** --- Talk with student about what they already know about the subject of the book or passage before beginning reading to engage their thinking.

**\*Establish a purpose for reading** --- Discuss why a particular book is being read: is it simply for pleasure, to find out information, to learn something new, etc; this helps students focus on what they need to learn while they're reading.

**\*Retelling** --- After reading a story or a part of a story or passage, ask the student to retell the story to you in their own words; this is a good way for you to see if they are missing important parts of the passage and can then go back and reread the parts they missed.

**\*Follow-up on Prediction** --- After reading, have student go back and check to see if their prediction was correct. Stress that a prediction doesn't have to be "right", it just needs to make sense.

# In Closing....

It is the hope of everyone at South Tama County Schools that this will be a great experience for you, our literacy volunteers, as well as the students and staff of the school. It is truly a wonderful opportunity to work with children and make a difference in other's lives. As we all look for ways to make a positive impact on our world, we feel that you have made a great choice in the way you will be doing just that!

As we close this handbook we want you to know that you are never alone, there are always people to ask for help, suggestions, directions or just an ear to listen to you. Below are listed names of staff, outside of the classroom teachers that you will be teaming with, at our building that will be great resources for you and are prepared to help in any way they can. No question is silly or unimportant!

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Have fun. Smile. Laugh. Learn. Grow. Enjoy.

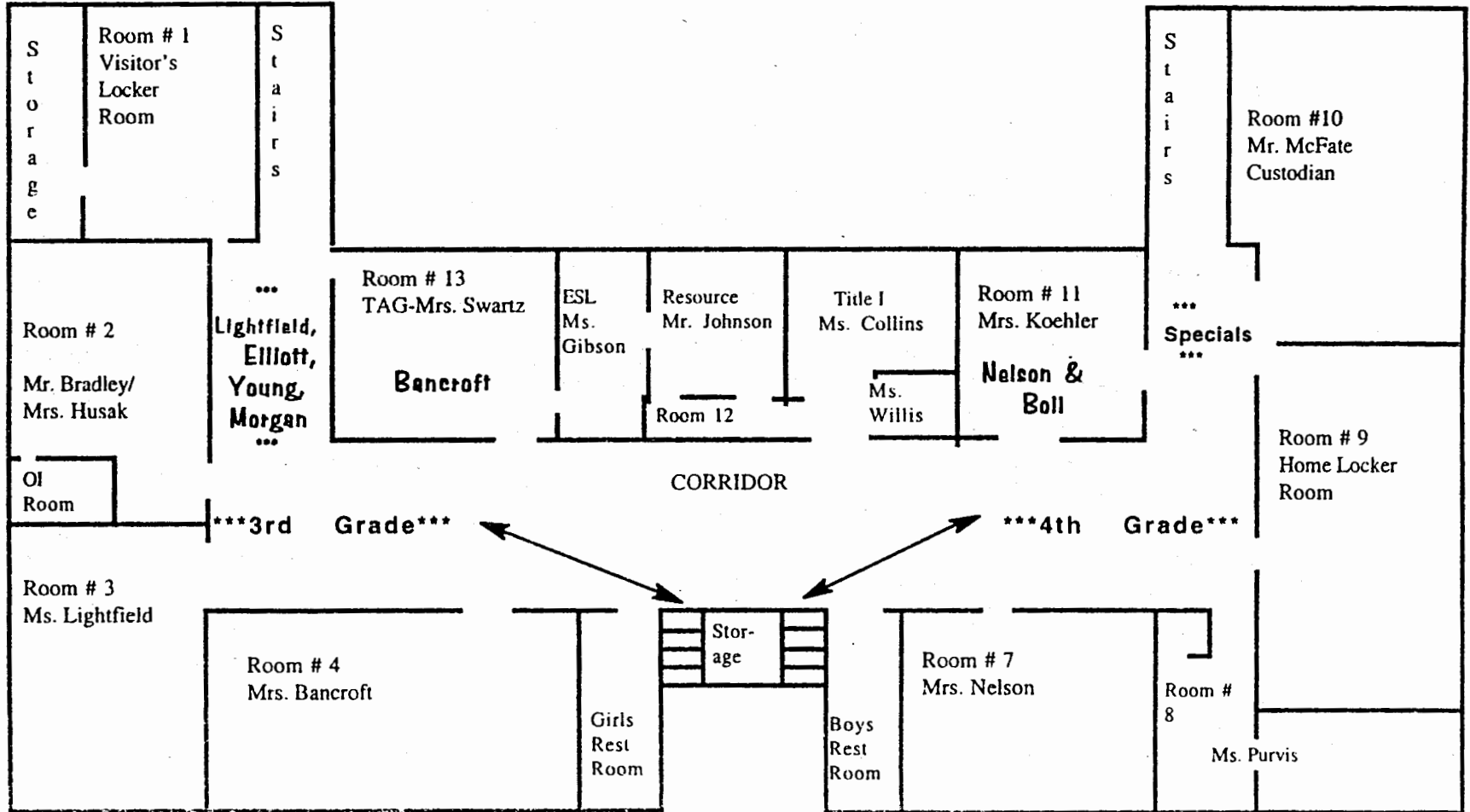
# Just Some Extras!



STC Intermediate -Ground Floor

North

\*\*\*DESIGNATED SHELTER AREAS\*\*\*



# DISASTER DRILL

**ASSIGNED AREA: Stay in this room, close door, kneel away from the door.**

**DISASTER DRILL WILL BE ANNOUNCED OVER THE INTERCOM-FOLLOWED BY CONTINUOUS RINGING OF THE RECESS BELLS.**

# **FIRE DRILL**

**EXIT: South Main Doors**

**ALTERNATE EXIT: Northeast Door**

**THE FIRE ALARM SYSTEM WILL BE  
ACTIVATED.**