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## Program Resource Guide

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**Oklahoma City  
Public Schools**

## OKLAHOMA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS MISSION:

Every day, Oklahoma City Public Schools will ignite a passion for learning in every child, invite families to engage, and inspire respectful and trusting relationships with our diverse community.

## THE FOUNDATION FOR OKLAHOMA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS MISSION:

To advance excellence, create champions, and build strong community support for lasting change in Oklahoma City Public Schools.

## READOKC MISSION:

Create a culture of reading and literacy in Oklahoma City, beginning with our students.

## READING BUDDIES MISSION:

Expand and enhance the Reading Buddies Program in the Oklahoma City Public School District in order to improve students' attitudes toward reading.

## Goals & Objectives

As a Reading Buddy your goals are to:

- Spend consistent time with students to increase self-esteem, foster self-motivation, and promote responsibility.
- Assist in improving students' attitudes toward reading.

Each year hundreds of volunteers share their time and energy to enhance educational opportunities, contributing thousands of hours of service and support for our schools. Volunteers assist staff and students by taking an active role in helping every student achieve success. By contributing their time and talent, they help inspire students to learn, dream, hope, and become leaders.

The goal of the OKCPS Community Relations team is to provide resources to community partners to strengthen their volunteer programs in schools.

This Program Resource Guide is designed to assist you in coordinating a Reading Buddies Program in an OKCPS school. Questions regarding a particular school may be directed to OKCPS Community Relations staff or the school's Reading Buddies Liaison.



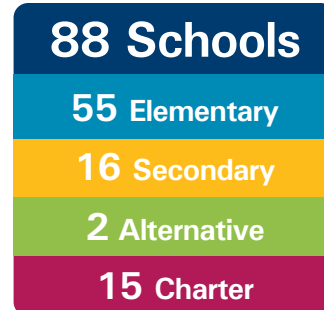
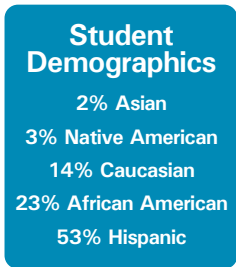
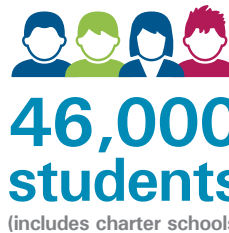
# District Overview

Oklahoma City Public Schools (OKCPS) is a multicultural district serving approximately 46,000 students. Our students are educated throughout 55 neighborhood elementary schools, 16 secondary schools, 2 alternative schools, and 15 charter schools, located within 135.5 square miles.

OKCPS employs approximately 4,600 administrators, teachers, and support personnel who serve a student population comprised of 2% Asian, 3% Native American, 14% Caucasian, 23% African American, and 53% Hispanic individuals.

84% of our students are considered economically disadvantaged. OKCPS offers 8 special education programs across the district to serve the 15% of our population with disabilities or special needs.

Additionally, 35% of our students are English Language Learners. Our students and their families represent 52 different languages; top two are English with 63% and Spanish with 34%.



**35%**  
Students are English Language Learners

## Reading Buddies Program Models

The following models are given as general guidelines but may be adapted with the approval of the school principal.

One-on-One	Group Reading	Book Club
Reading Buddies will read with one student weekly, approximately 30-45 minutes.	Reading Buddies will read with a group of three to four students weekly, approximately 30-45 minutes.	Reading Buddies will read with a group of five to seven students weekly, approximately 30-45 minutes.
Groups typically meet during the school day at a time determined by the principal, ensuring students do not miss core reading instruction. Reading Buddies typically meet with students from September to March.		

NOTE: Students selected for the Reading Buddies Program should primarily be focused on those reading below grade level. Because every student has an “Independent Reading Level” determined by the school, volunteers may find appropriately leveled books in the school’s Leveled Reading Room. Selecting books ON Level and ONE Level above for students to read will make the experience more successful. Research shows that when students read at “just right” levels (Independent Reading Level), they will develop greater fluency and comprehension because they are not struggling too much with decoding words. The School Liaison will help volunteers know the Independent Reading Level of their students.

# Partner Process

1. Community Partner contacts OKCPS Community Relations team. Community Partners may come from any organization or group with a team of adults willing to volunteer in a school. Individual community volunteers also may volunteer as Reading Buddies by contacting the office.
2. OKCPS Community Relations staff suggest a school in need (ideally one that is in close proximity to the Community Partner's location) and share what type of program and availability is requested by the principal. The Community Partner and OKCPS Community Relations staff will continue to discuss until a match is made. Once a match is made Community Relations staff will share general information about the school, the Reading Buddies model the school has requested, and contact information for the school Reading Buddies Coordinator.
3. Community Partner identifies one person as the Community Partner Contact and provides that person's contact information to OKCPS Community Relations staff.
4. Community Partner Contact recruits volunteers and asks them to complete the required online OKCPS Volunteer Application. This form must be submitted and a background check completed before a volunteer may meet with a student.
5. School Reading Buddies Coordinator works with Community Partner Contact to schedule an orientation with Reading Buddies volunteers before they begin meeting with students. At the orientation, the school principal will cover rules and procedures. The Reading Buddies Coordinator will explain when and where volunteers will meet with students and what they will do during their times with students. The Reading Buddies Coordinator will provide reading materials and assistance with knowing what reading levels are appropriate for students.
6. Volunteers meet with students!
7. Volunteers should primarily communicate through the Community Partner Contact who will then communicate with the Reading Buddies Coordinator if needed. However, for last-minute absences, the Reading Buddy volunteer should contact the school Reading Buddies Coordinator so students can be made aware. Unaddressed concerns may be communicated to the Community Relations office.
8. Community Relations staff will facilitate end-of-year Reading Buddies Program evaluations.
9. The school Reading Buddies Coordinator will facilitate volunteer recognition activities by the school.
10. Reading Buddies will hopefully sign up for the following year as well!

# Responsibilities

## COMMUNITY PARTNER CONTACT

- Each Community Partner shall assign a Community Partner Contact who will communicate directly with the school Reading Buddies Coordinator and be responsible for the following duties.
- Maintain an up-to-date school information sheet (next page).
- Identify volunteer Reading Buddies and ensure they complete the OKCPS volunteer application process before meeting with students.
- Maintain an accurate record of current volunteers and their volunteer times.
- Work with Reading Buddies Coordinator to schedule volunteer orientation before program begins.
- Alert Reading Buddies Coordinator if you know a volunteer will be absent.
- Communicate with Reading Buddies Coordinator or OKCPS Community Relations staff regarding any challenges that arise.



## SCHOOL READING BUDDIES COORDINATOR

- Each school shall determine which Reading Buddies Model is preferred and the days and times that Reading Buddies volunteers may come to the school. Each school also shall assign a staff Reading Buddies Coordinator who will communicate directly with the Community Partner Contact and be responsible for the following duties.
- Maintain up-to-date school information and share it with Community Partner Contact.
- Work with Community Partner Contact to schedule volunteer orientation before program begins. Discuss with the Community Partner Contact confidentiality guidelines for working with students. Match volunteers with students.
- Identify students to participate in the Reading Buddies Program. In general, identified students should be no more than a few reading levels behind. Students reading far below grade level likely need more targeted intervention than what a volunteer Reading Buddy is likely to be able to provide.
- Lead the volunteer orientation. After the school principal welcomes the volunteers and covers general rules and procedures, explain to volunteers where and when they will meet with students. Show them Leveled Book Room Resources and other resources you will have available for them.
- Communicate with Community Partner Contact or OKCPS Community Relations staff regarding any challenges that arise.

## OKCPS COMMUNITY RELATIONS TEAM

- Recruit and connect Community Partners with schools interested in starting Reading Buddies Programs.
- Assist Community Partner Contact and school Reading Buddies Coordinator with volunteer orientation as needed.
- Assist with end-of-year Reading Buddies Program evaluation.
- Strengthen partnership relationships as needed.



# Oklahoma City Public Schools

## SCHOOL INFORMATION SHEET

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

School Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Check-in Procedures: \_\_\_\_\_

Parking: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign in and out of school using the volunteer kiosk.

Always wear the volunteer badge provided by the school while in the building.

## SCHOOL RULES

- All OKCPS grounds are non-smoking
- All OKCPS grounds are drug-free and weapon-free zones
- Please follow the directions of the principal or other school officials when at the school.

# Volunteer Guidelines

1. **Expertise:** Volunteers do NOT need to have an education background or degree. If you can read at a 6th-grade level, you can help a child read! Volunteers are there as facilitators—to support students as they practice their reading.
2. **Gifts:** Your gift of time is valuable. We ask that no monetary gifts or in-kind gifts be given.
3. **Confidentiality:** No volunteer should be permitted to access, review, disclose, or use confidential student information, or participate in conversations in which confidential student information is discussed. Volunteers are held to the same standards of Code of Conduct as district staff and must observe all Board of Education policies.
4. **Code of Conduct:** Volunteers should always be supervised by at least one district employee. Keep in mind, volunteers act as role models in appropriate dress, language, and behavior.
5. **Volunteer/Student Relationship:** For the protection of all, relationships between volunteers and students must be kept appropriate at all times. Continuing a relationship with students outside of school activities is not permitted. Volunteers should not give money, gifts, or medication of any kind to students.
6. **Appropriate touching** such as handshakes, high fives, an arm or hug around a shoulder are the only safe and friendly ways to touch a child. For some children, or for some cultures, even these gestures may be unwelcome. No child should be subject to unwelcome touching, no matter how well intended. If a child ever inappropriately touches you, please inform a staff member right away. Volunteers are role models for students. Conversations with students and staff should demonstrate respect for others and avoid language that may be perceived as discriminatory, profane, sexist, or offensive.
7. **Non-Discrimination:** No student or staff person should ever be treated differently, spoken to disrespectfully, or denied services on the basis of sex, race, religion, disability, age, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, or marital status. In addition, school personnel or volunteers cannot encourage or promote religious beliefs by class activities, comments, or invitations to their place of worship.
8. **Suspected Abuse or Neglect:** Reasonable suspicion of abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, or illegal and/or dangerous activities should be immediately disclosed to staff.
9. **Photography:** Photographing students is prohibited at all times, unless it has been approved by Communications and/or Community Relations.
10. **Discipline:** Any discipline of a student should be left to a staff member. Never touch a child in anger or grab or chase students. Physical punishment is never permitted. If a child becomes unmanageable, find the nearest staff member.
11. **School Safety Plan:** In the event of an emergency (fire, tornado, etc.), volunteers should be familiar with the Safety Plan of the building and should follow the directions of the school Reading Buddies Coordinator and other staff.
12. **Prohibitions:** OKCPS administrators reserve the right to suspend the visitation privileges of any person(s) who may threaten the peaceful and orderly operation of the school system's environment.
13. **Liability:** The District cannot provide any type of health insurance to cover illness or accident incurred while serving as a volunteer, nor is the person eligible for workers' compensation. Community Partner Groups are required to provide certificate of insurance naming Oklahoma City Public Schools as an additional insured at the request of OKCPS Risk Management.
14. **Cultural Awareness:** We want to ensure we provide the highest level of compassion, care, and quality for our diverse student population while making them feel comfortable and welcomed. OKCPS recognizes that diversity embraces race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and disability.

## READING BUDDIES SHOULD:

- Be a consistent volunteer. Students look forward to reading with their Reading Buddies and enjoy seeing them at the scheduled times. Anticipating this time has even increased some students' attendance rates.
- Keep communication lines open with the school Reading Buddies Coordinator. Express any concerns with the Reading Buddies Coordinator or the Community Relations team.
- Follow school protocol and rules.
- Keep information about the student confidential.
- Keep comments made in the presence of students positive (see tips).
- Always have volunteer identification visible.



## READING BUDDIES SHOULD NOT:

- Be alone with a child or student in a closed room.
- Give medication, medical treatment, or medical advice to a student.
- Take a student off school grounds for any reason.
- Promote personal or religious beliefs to a student.
- Promote any political candidate or parties to a student.
- Solicit students or parents to a particular brand, product, or business.
- Lend students money.
- Provide any type of gift to student.
- Give personal contact information to a student or connect to a student on social media.

## EFFECTIVE WAYS TO WORK WITH STUDENTS

1. Be warm and friendly. Show an interest in what the student does and tells you. Listen well.
2. Keep your commitment to arrive consistently and on time. Students look forward to your visits. Keep promises and apologize if you make a mistake.
3. Encourage students to think. Give students plenty of time to answer questions or self-correct when reading. Silence often means the student is organizing his or her thoughts.
4. Admit when you don't know an answer. We can't know everything all the time! Feel free to ask the student or teacher for help when needed.
5. Encourage students. Use tact and positive comments. Look for something worthy of a compliment, especially when a student is having difficulty.
6. Let students "talk out" problems. If a student is upset, you don't need to solve the problem. By listening, you let the student know you care.
7. Look for teachable moments.
8. Maintain a sense of humor.

## BUILDING A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE

**Self-image:** What a student believes about himself or herself in a specific situation.

Remember that self-image is dependent on context. A student may feel very confident at home, on the athletic field, or with his/her peers but have a very negative self-image as a student.



## READING TIPS AND POINTERS

### Tips for building comprehension skills

The goal is to build background knowledge, vocabulary, and positive associations with reading. You also can work on building comprehension skills by asking questions as you read that check comprehension and encourage engagement with the material.

- **BEFORE** reading the book—Ask the student to predict what he/she thinks the story will be about based on the title and pictures and why.
- **DURING** reading the book—Interact with the book while reading. Encourage the student to predict, visualize, and connect to things he/she knows.
- **AFTER** reading the book—Have the student retell the story in his or her own words. Ask questions about what happened and what the student thought about what happened.

Do not underestimate the power of just being there to listen to and encourage. That alone can go a long way toward building skill, confidence, and a positive association with reading. Let me know if you would like more suggestions for how to help your student. Thank you for making this investment of your time!

A student with a positive self-image is	A student with a negative self-image is
Self-motivated	Lacking initiative
Eager to learn	Fearing failure
Cooperative	Demanding own way or not responsive
Unafraid of new experiences	Afraid of new experiences
Secure	Insecure
Successful	Expecting to fail in school
Decisive	Indecisive
Sure of self	Unsure of self
Confident	Reliant on others or safety of elaborate rituals/routines
Able to praise self and others	Putting down self and others or bragging excessively
Phrases to Encourage your Student	
You're so much fun to be around	That's fabulous
You get better at that every time I see you	There you go; that's it
I know you worked very hard on that	You're so helpful; thank you
I'm going to brag about this	The time I spend with you is really special
That's the best I've seen	You're going to make it
You're so thoughtful	I wish I could have done it that well
That is a tremendous improvement	You'll always be in my hall of fame
You're such a joy to work with	Thanks for working so hard

# OPTIONAL RESOURCES

**Objective:** To see that there is a logical pattern within most English words, which gives students a strategy for decoding unfamiliar words.

There is a pattern to approximately 99% of the most commonly used English words and 87% of all English words in the dictionary. In English, there are about 70 basic phonograms and 28 key spelling rules. Since there is a pattern, there can be a strategy for decoding unfamiliar words.



## **Knowing phonograms and general spelling rules:**

- Gives students a strategy for decoding unfamiliar words
- Helps students with spelling
- Builds confidence in students because they can have a plan of attack for decoding unfamiliar words

There are single-letter phonograms and multi-letter phonograms (about 70 phonograms in all). Students need mastery of these building blocks of the English language.

## **Most common basic spelling rules:**

- C says /s/ before E, I, or Y.
- G may say /j/ before E, I, or Y.
- Q always needs a U. U is not a vowel here.
- S never says /z/ at the beginning of a word.
- For vowels, the first and most common sound is the short sound. The second most common sound is the long sound (where the vowel says its name, usually at the end of a syllable).
- The 4 most common reasons for silent final E.
  1. To make a vowel say its name (long sound) before a consonant. EX: hope
  2. English words do not end with V or U. EX: love, avenue
  3. To make a C say /s/ or G say /j/. EX: dance, strange
  4. Every syllable must have a written vowel. EX: little, acre

## **Aspects of reading:**

- Decoding—taking the parts of a written word (phonograms) into a whole word with meaning; ie., reading
- Encoding—breaking a whole word into its written parts (phonograms); ie., spelling
- Fluency—decoding at a fast enough rate for words and sentences to be read in meaningful chunks. The more automatic decoding becomes, the greater the fluency. Sufficient fluency is necessary for comprehension.
- Comprehension—understanding what is read; the goal of reading

While comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading, decoding and encoding—with plenty of practice in order to achieve fluency—are necessary precursors. A student is much less likely to comprehend a passage when he must labor over every syllable and word in the paragraph. With practice comes automaticity, which allows the brain to be freed up to focus on comprehending the meaning of the passage.

By providing one-on-one feedback and encouragement to an emerging reader, you are helping him to practice accurate decoding, improve fluency, and work on comprehension.

Adapted from *Spell to Write and Read* (BHI) and *The Writing Road to Reading* (Spalding Education)

# FAQ's

## What if I would like to bring a gift or card to my student?

Your gift of time is valuable. We ask that no monetary gifts be given.

## What if my student tells me something that concerns me?

Please notify the Reading Buddies Coordinator immediately.

## What if my student doesn't want to try?

Encourage your student to do his/her best. There may be a reason for the lack of effort. If the situation persists, notify the Reading Buddies Coordinator.

## How do I deal with an uncomfortable family matter or event in my student's life?

Your job as a Reading Buddy is not to solve every issue or situation for your student, but to be a support during difficult times. If you have a concern about a student, discuss it with the Reading Buddies Coordinator.

## What if I want to know how my student is progressing?

You may ask the Reading Buddies Coordinator, keeping in mind that most information is confidential. Always remember your objective is to assist in improving the student's attitude toward reading more than anything else.

## What if the directions for the lesson are unclear?

Ask for assistance. It is good modeling for students to see that their mentor needs to ask for help sometimes.

## What if my student asks for my cell phone number or email address?

You are mentoring within a school-based program. This means that the time and communication you have with your student needs to stay within the school boundaries. Volunteers should not share personal contact information with students.

## If I have concerns regarding my student, the program, or other issues what should I do?

You should first talk to your Community Partner Contact, who may then refer you to the school Reading Buddies Coordinator if needed.

# Communication

It is vital to keep the lines of communication open. If you have a concern that is not addressed by the Community Partner Contact or the Reading Buddies Coordinator, feel free to contact the OKCPS Community Relations office.



Deisy Escalera, Community Relations Manager

(405) 587-0275 | [www.okcps.org](http://www.okcps.org)

Oklahoma City Public Schools Community Relations

***Thank you for your participation.***

***The role you are playing is changing a child's life forever!***