
BUDDY READING PROGRAM

Mill Street Elementary School

Naperville, Illinois

The Buddy Reading Program between North Central College and Mill Street Elementary School is the partnership of approximately sixty pre-service education students and sixty fourth and fifth graders exchanging dialogue on a one-to-one basis about a specific novel.

Communication is via a college-based WEBboard that allows students to exchange ideas and make connections using the latest computer technology. The program's goals for students are twofold: fourth and fifth grade students will (1) participate in a learning dialogue about grade appropriate literature and (2) utilize communication aspects of technology. The program also complements the school improvement objective to create opportunities for students to interact with the community as a way to see reading as a meaningful lifelong activity.

Twice a week for three weeks, the fourth and fifth graders engaged in written discussions via the WEBboard with their college reading buddy. Mill Street students enhanced their reading comprehension skills by making predictions and connections and holding authentic meaningful discussions about the novels with their college reading buddies. The North Central College students incorporated reading strategies from their methods classes and from Mill Street teachers in their web-based discussions and face-to-face meetings with students. Together in the Buddy Reading Program, fourth graders and their college buddies read *Yang the Youngest*, *Junebug*, and *Jackie Robinson*, while fifth graders and their college buddies read *Pigs Might Fly*, *Harry's Mad*, and *Martin's Mice*. All novels were part of the district curriculum.

A subcommittee of the Literacy Goal Team at Mill Street Elementary worked with the Department of Education at North Central College to create the Buddy Reading Program. Parents participated in the initial team discussions and worked with the subcommittee as needed. Planning began with a meeting in the fall between fourth and fifth grade teachers, the reading specialist, the technology integration specialist, the reading instructors from North Central College, and the principal.

The technology component proved to be the primary challenge. The Mill Street technology department assisted in arranging Internet access so that the fourth and fifth graders could access the North Central College WEBboard.

The Buddy Reading Program incurred minimal costs—about \$75 for refreshments and \$75 for transporting students to North Central College for face-to-face visits. Technology was provided through the school and the college. The college students participated as part of their pre-service teaching methodologies courses. Now that the school's Internet access and capacity has been improved, it will be easier to implement the communication via WEBboard next year.

As a result of the Buddy Reading Program, Mill Street students enhanced their technology and reading comprehension skills while engaging in meaningful dialogue with positive community role models around novels.

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