

Reading Mentoring Program

*Banyan Elementary School
Miami, Florida*

Banyan Elementary School's Reading Mentoring Program began when a high school student approached the principal asking to tutor third graders. She recruited 40 of her classmates from St. Brendan High School, and offered to start a weekly reading tutorial with 42 third graders experiencing reading difficulties.

The St. Brendan High student coordinator met and trained the mentors on a regular basis and wrote monthly lesson plans for the students. The mentors went above and beyond the call of normal tutoring: they dressed up in costumes and read folk tales from different countries; planted flowers in Banyan's butterfly garden; and made valentines in February with the Banyan students. Tutors hoped to raise student achievement and minimize third-grade retention. They felt that one-on-one tutoring would help the majority of third graders learn to read at grade level.

The tutorial program cost \$1,000 to implement and was funded through the Florida Governor's Mentoring Initiative. Businesses such as the Florida Lottery, Comcast, and Florida Trendnext provided program support as well. The school publicized the tutorial program through weekly newsletters, fliers, and posters. Information about the program reached an even larger audience through the Trendnext magazine, MDCPS Bureau of Community Services web site, and the Florida Department of Education web site.

High school students and third graders benefited from the program. Many of the third graders were English as second language (ESOL) students who needed extra help to

move beyond level one in reading. After being a part of the program, all of these students increased their reading scores on both the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) and the Norm Reference Test. Additionally, the high school students found enjoyment and satisfaction from their work. In an article for *Floridanext.com*, one teen mentor commented, "I love working with kids, so this was an awesome experience for me. I see how the kids have improved their reading, and that gives me a great feeling of success!"

The partnership between Banyan Elementary and St. Brendan High Schools has been well received by families, students, and staff at both schools. Inspired by the reading mentoring program's success, the schools have partnered for science fairs and other student activities. The reading mentoring program will expand to support more students in the next school year.

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