

**Title:** Reading Buddies — Helping Your High School Students Learn the Importance of Quality Literature for Children

**Grade Ranges:**

K-4  
 5-8  
 9-12

**Subject Tag:**

Social Studies: Government: Civics

Reading Skills

Creative Writing: General

**Synopsis:**

This plan provides a series of lessons and activities designed to pair a high school class with a class of kindergarten students. The purpose of the unit is to give the older students the opportunity to be reading role models for younger children. The plan includes ideas about involving your public library and librarians, oral interpretive reading assignments, and writing assignments that reinforce other components of the high school writing curriculum. This lesson can be easily modified to include inclusion/special ed students, thus providing the opportunity for them to be role models. Additionally, students can pair with elementary-aged students in grades other than kindergarten.

**Keywords:**

children's literature, education looping, tutoring, reading, technical writing within the Language Arts curriculum, inclusion, annotated bibliography, mentoring, service-learning

**Body:**

In order to complete this series of lessons, it is first necessary to contact a kindergarten teacher who is willing to be involved with a project of this type. The purpose is to link high school seniors with a kindergarten class, and the students in both classes are involved in a series of activities throughout the year. In considering which classes to use, be aware of time commitments and schedules, transportation, and numbers of students in each class. Usually permission forms are required for the high school students to participate, and it is suggested that the kindergarten teacher inform parents. It may also be helpful for the two teachers to meet and discuss particular student needs so that students can be paired appropriately.

1. The initial plan is focused on preparing the high school students for the first visit to the class. Each high school student will write a letter to his/her buddy (which should then be typed on the computer) using the correct friendly letter format. The students need to be aware of the purpose and audience; therefore the letter should appeal to a younger child, should use appropriate language, and should be a brief introduction to the reading buddy program. Usually the kindergarten class sends some kind of response to the high school students —frequently pictures.

2. This series of lessons has been very successful with classes of challenged high school learners because they are able to be role models, many of them for the first time. The lesson also helps to reinforce the value of reading aloud to small children. In order for students to recognize quality children's literature, the next step is to invite a librarian from your local public library to come to the class and share some quality books. Many librarians have children's literature specialists, and these professionals can also model effective reading that appeals to young children. You can also use children's literature throughout the year as introductions to other units. (For example, read *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* as an introduction to John Gardner's *Grendel*.)
3. It is the high school students' responsibility to go to the public library to check out some books they would like to share with their buddies. Some will need to apply for a library card in order to do this (and this may be covered during the librarian's visit if possible).
4. The students bring their books to class, and then they write annotated bibliographies of the books they have selected.
5. The students also practice reading their books aloud to each other. If necessary, you can model this practice, emphasizing reading expression, fluency, and using the illustrations effectively.
6. After the first visit, students write reflection pieces about their experiences and set goals/ideas for the next visit based on information they learned about their buddies during the first visit.
7. This procedure is repeated 4-6 times throughout the year. Sometimes you can incorporate holiday themes and activities for the students. For example, during the month of October, there are many Halloween books for children available at the library, but the students must be careful to select books that are not too frightening for younger readers. Sometimes students are interested in writing their own children's books to share with their buddies. It is also necessary to communicate regularly with the kindergarten teacher in the selection of appropriate texts and individual student needs.
8. At the end of the year, the high school students write a final letter to their buddies. Sometimes you are able to schedule a visit to the high school for the kindergarteners.

**Related Links:**

The American Library Association's Caldecott Medal Home Page

<http://www.ala.org/alsc/caldecott.html>

The Official Home Page of Caldecott Medals — contains a printable list of former winners as well as brief descriptions of the books and several helpful links.

**Features:**

- Contains special education tips
- Quick Activity (less than 30 minutes; story starter)
- Requires Internet access for students to complete

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to recognize and appreciate quality children's literature by learning about it and reading aloud for a particular audience and purpose.
2. Students will be able to increase self-confidence by serving as role models for younger students.
3. Students will be able to write friendly letters using correct mechanics and for a specific audience.
4. Students will be able to use correct bibliography format.

**Standards:**

**NY: 1.** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding **2.** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression **4.** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

**NYC: E1B.** Read and comprehend at least four books on the same subject, or by the same author, or in the same genre; **E3B.** Participate in group meetings; **E4A.** Independently and habitually demonstrate an understanding of the rules of the English language in written and oral work.

**CT: 1.** Reading and responding. Students will read and respond in individual, literal, critical and evaluative ways to literary, informational and persuasive texts. **3.** Applying English language conventions. Students will apply the conventions of standard English in oral and written communication. **4.** Exploring and responding to texts. Students will use the language arts to explore and respond to classical and contemporary texts from many cultures and literary periods.

**NJ : 3.4.** Students will read various materials and texts with comprehension and critical analysis **3.2.** Students will listen actively in a variety of situations to information from a variety of sources.

**Prerequisite Skills:**

1. Some experience reading aloud is helpful but not required.

**Time Required:**

may be ongoing all year — each visit can be completed within one class session

**Technology and Materials Needed:**

1. Access to public library or library with children's books
2. Transportation needs

**Assessment Criteria:**

1. Annotated bibliographies
2. Letters to buddies
3. Reflection pieces and goals for next visit

**Recommended Lesson Plan Review Date:**

NA

**Review Comments:**

NA