



Becoming a Reading Buddy

WHAT DO I DO?

- 1) Talk with your assigned Reading Buddy's teacher about the best time and location for you to meet. Ask if she will provide a book on your child's reading level or if you should bring a book. (Do not bring Bible stories or Bibles.)
- 2) Exchange email addresses with the teacher so that you can have continued conversation.
- 3) Plan to meet your child and always be on time so that your child will not miss instructional time or be late to another activity.
- 4) After you get to know your child's interests, you might bring books from home or from the library.
- 5) You will spend time listening to your buddy read and reading to him/her. You might let them decide who goes first. Read to them with expression and take time to look at pictures. Make your time together fun!
- 6) Your teacher may give you a list of questions to ask after reading. If not, feel free to naturally ask questions about what you have read.
- 7) If you unable to come to school on your scheduled day, let your reading buddy's teacher know ahead of time. Your buddy will be looking forward to seeing you!**

WHAT IS MY ROLE?

It is not your responsibility to teach reading, but to offer opportunities for exposure to literature and reading. You are there to make reading fun, and to provide support and encouragement. You will also be showing that you care about them as you develop a relationship and show up consistently.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Not all children are the same. They have different gifts, abilities, and challenges, but they are ALL made in the image of God.

Children with reading challenges often have other challenges as well. Maybe they are being raised in a culture of poverty - and this has contributed to their struggle in the classroom. A lack of food and proper nutrition, living in chaos and lacking stability, not getting enough sleep and/or not having someone who can help and support schoolwork at home all contribute to their situation.

Understanding the difference poverty makes in a child's life will guide us as we work with our Reading Buddies.

1) When you meet them, take time to talk with them and get to know them. Ask how their week has been. Listen. Engage. Don't be shocked at their stories; their culture is different than yours. Learn to listen and respond acknowledging their feelings. Remember you may be the only person all week who takes time to sit and connect with them and what they are thinking/feeling.

2) Talk in a way that is less formal than the typical, "Hi, how are you doing?" or "How was your week?" Connect less formally. "What's going on?"

3) Choose books that you think will interest your student. When you talk about a story, help them learn to retell a story from beginning, middle to end. Children in a culture of poverty tend to tell stories in a circular fashion - starting with the most exciting part and "circling around". They need to learn the skill of thinking/telling a story in a linear fashion.

4) All children may get "antsy" in the 30 minutes you are with them. Children in poverty are often more physical in many ways. They may need to get up and move at some point. Take a break and do some jumping jacks, toe touches, or stretch to the sky. You may also notice that they want to sit very close to you. You must be aware of appropriate boundaries, but also understand that this is a special time of connecting for them as you read a book - and they are responding by trying to be physically closer.

5) If your administration allows you to bring in a snack, be sure there are no food allergies and bring something nutritional - fruits, vegetables, proteins. They may have only had chips for dinner.

6) If you hear something that is concerning to you (abuse in the home, water or electricity turned off), talk about this discreetly with the school administration.

If you are interested in learning more about working with children in poverty, contact the Serve Team at the South Carolina Baptist Convention. They offer training in this area.

All volunteers in a school are required to have a SLED background check. There is a \$25 cost for each background check. The results are valid for two years. If your volunteers or church needs help with these expenses, reach out to Heart4Schools for a conversation.

Backpack Buddies

How do I provide backpacks for the food insecure?

The school will provide you with the number of backpacks needed. There are several ways that you can do this:

1) Partner with your local food bank, Harvest Hope. They provide a prepacked bag with eight nutritional items for \$6. (The cost may increase due to Covid-19 scarcity of items.) The items in the bag are rotated each week.

2) You may choose to shop for items yourself and fill gallon Ziplock bags. Items should be nutritional and should not require any cooking. Church members can work together to fill bags and then deliver to schools.

3) If there is a great need, you might partner with other churches in the area and provide the backpacks on a rotating schedule so that you are sharing costs and resources.

4) You may choose to have food drives at your church to collect the food. You will need to have a specific list of items needed.

Taking a backpack to the school does not have to be the end of your ministry. Pray over these bags. Talk with the guidance counselor about other ways to meet the needs of the families represented. Some churches provide a Thanksgiving and/or Christmas meal at their church. This also gives them an opportunity to share the hope of the gospel. Others provide Angel Tree gifts for these families. The possibilities are endless!

Resources

Educating All God's Children: What Christians Can - and Should - Do to Improve Public Education for Low-Income Kids, Nicole Baker Fulgham

Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church by Reggie McNeal.

The Mission-Minded Guide to Church and School Partnerships by Jack McGlothlin.